

HISTORY
OF THE
CATHOLIC
CHURCH

MOURRET-
THOMPSON

VOLUME
ONE

B. HERDER

+

To Sister Mary Catherine of the
Holy Eucharist
in loving memory of
Mother and Dad!

From your loving sister
Catherine

Sekt. 26, 1957

Anniversary

Mother Nov. 20, 1929

Dad Dec 5, 1956

Please pray for them.

MONASTERY OF ST. DOMINIC
13th AVENUE AND SOUTH 10th STREET
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY - 07102

A HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

BY

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TRANSLATED BY

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VOLUME ONE

PERIOD OF EARLY EXPANSION

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

A comprehensive history of the Church for English readers has long been needed. Such a work should contain a wealth of detailed information that cannot be embraced within the compass of a two or three volume abridgment; it should indicate, by more than passing mention, the causes, development, and consequences of the notable movements that have affected the Church; it should be written by an eminent scholar whose talent combines tireless patience in research, sound historical judgment, facility in clear exposition, unswerving loyalty to ascertained truth, and a zeal for God's honor; and it should be provided with an adequate index. As we read in Chapter II of the Second Book of Machabees, "to collect all that is to be known, to put the discourse in order, and curiously to discuss every particular point, is the duty of the author of a history. . . . We have taken care for those indeed that are willing to read, that it might be a pleasure of mind, and that all that read might receive profit." Persuaded that Mourret's *History of the Catholic Church* meets these requirements, we have undertaken the translation of it, that students of history in English-speaking countries may have ready access to the treasures of information which it contains.

THE TRANSLATOR

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

"The history of the Church may rightly be called the history of truth."¹ Bossuet develops this thought, saying: "Truth is a queen dwelling in herself and in her own light. . . . Yet, for man's good, she is willing to reign, and Christ came into the world to found that empire. . . . Amid the passions of a world sworn to her defeat, she has not begged for human aid. She herself has formed for her defense fearless champions who are worthy of her greatness. . . . This is what I mean when I call the history of the Church a history of the reign of truth. The world has threatened, but the truth has stood firm; the world has used clever deceits and flattery, but the truth has remained uncorrupted. Heretics have stirred up mischief and confusion, but the truth has remained pure. Schisms have torn the body of the Church, but the truth has remained whole."²

The truth here spoken of by Pascal and Bossuet is simply religious truth. But that is precisely the kind of truth which enlightens us about our origin, our destiny, and our duties; this is "the whole man."

In one sense, the history of this truth goes back to the very earliest times of the world, for God, the sole revealer of our origin and destiny, spoke by His prophets before speaking to us by His Son Jesus Christ,³ and it is permissible to say that the Church is composed of all those who have lived by these

¹ Pascal, *Thoughts*.

² Bossuet, *Sermon sur la divinité de Jésus-Christ*.

³ Heb. 1:1. "What greater authority can there be than that of the Catholic Church, which centers in itself all the authority of past ages, and the ancient traditions of mankind up to their first origin?" Bossuet, *The Continuity of Religion* (i. e., *Discourse on Universal History*, Part II), tr. by Victor Day, p. 227.

revelations, even all those who, "invincibly ignorant of revealed dogmas but following the precepts of the natural law and disposed to obey God in all things, have, by virtue of divine light and grace, been able to acquire life eternal." ⁴ If by the Church we mean all those who are called, who believe in the true God, the Church has always existed." ⁵ From this point of view we may regard the Church "as appearing in three successive phases. The first, universal in principle, but made to last only until Christ, is the Patriarchal Church, composed of those who preserved the tradition of religious truth without any organization except that of the family, without any aid except remnants of more or less altered revelations and graces more or less consciously received. The second, essentially local, is the Mosaic Church, at once a spiritual and a temporal society, including merely the Jewish people and given a special organization for effectively conserving the truth until Christ. The third, universal and perpetual, is the Christian Church properly so called, the Catholic Church, a spiritual society organized to embrace all races and all ages, and continually aided in the infallible accomplishment of her mission." ⁶

Notwithstanding the notable progress recently made in the history of religions, it will always remain difficult to carry out the vast plan of religious history contemplated by Frederick Ozanam. His plan was to sift from the traditions of each people "an element immutable, universal, primitive," ⁷ which is truth. Christians know that "among races and nations outside Christianity, there still exist remains of primitive truths, mixed with numerous errors. They know that these peoples have a soul as have Christian peoples, religious desires and

⁴ Pius IX, Encyclical "*Quanto conficiamur*" (August 10, 1863), in Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, no. 1677.

⁵ Hurter, *Theologiae dogmaticae Compendium*, 7th ed., I, 209.

⁶ Brugère, *Tableau de l'histoire et de la littérature de l'Église*, I, 3.

⁷ Ozanam, *Letters*, p. 19.

longings formed according to the same plan, made for the same end. Christians are, therefore, not surprised at seeing those desires and aspirations express themselves by similar institutions and rites. What the Christian seeks and really finds in Christian doctrine, ceremonies, and Sacraments, these others also seek but do not find, and they try, by certain essays and efforts, to make up for the great mercy which they have not received in fulness.”⁸ By the very fact that religious truth is broken up, scattered, and mixed with numberless corruptions, its history presents difficulties that are practically insurmountable.

The same is not true of the history of the Church, understood in the stricter and more usual sense of the words, that is, the history of the spread and development of the visible society founded by Jesus Christ. This history may be divided into three periods, marked out by the three epochs which the Church has sought to penetrate with her spirit: the Greco-Roman period, the Middle Ages, and modern times.

“The Greco-Roman period extends from the time of Christ to the fall of the Roman Empire. During that epoch the Church grew in the midst of conflicts she was obliged to wage against violence and heresy. The Empire gave way, like a mold that has proved too small, and the barbarians poured in and seized upon the fragments.

“The Middle Ages extend from the fall of the Roman Empire to the Protestant Revolt. During that period the Church labored to train and then to unite these new races. But her work met with opposition from human passions, and the Church herself was weakened by contact with them. European unification was not accomplished and had to be supplemented by the system of European equilibrium.

“Modern times extend from the Protestant Revolt to our

⁸ Grandmaison, Preface to *Christus, manuel d'histoire des religions*, p. 43. This book and a larger work, *Où en est l'histoire des religions*, supply the elements for a universal history of religion.

own day. During this period the opposition bursts forth and repels the influence of the Church in things temporal and, in some countries, even attacks it in things spiritual, going back from the Church to the Gospel, from the Gospel to God. Useful outward progress is made, but men's souls have become superficial and restless. The Church acquires new vigor, draws her lines closer, and waits." ⁹

The Fathers of the Vatican Council, considering these varied phases of the life of the Church, regarded it as "an invincible testimony of our faith." ¹⁰

This testimony of the Church is to be found in her triumphs, in her benefactions to mankind, in her wonderful adaptation to different periods of history, in her immortal continuance. So obvious are the facts that no honest man denies that the Church in past ages has triumphed over obstacles of force, deceit, and intellectual pride by the use of means that would have destroyed any other society, and that she has disciplined and ennobled the individual, the family, and mankind. What arouses our admiration, what is unparalleled and altogether divine, is that this Church, which has continued to endure, has ever been attacked. A thousand times she appeared as though on the verge of being completely destroyed; and each time God raised her up by some extraordinary act of His power." ¹¹

H. A. Taine, in a celebrated passage, says that an impartial study of history reveals that Christianity has "the great pair of wings indispensable for lifting man above himself, above his grovelling life and his limited horizon," and that "every time these wings droop or suffer injury, public and private morals become debased, cruelty and sensuality stalk abroad, and society becomes a den of thieves and a brothel." ¹²

Less obvious at first glance is another trait of the Church's

⁹ Brugère, *loc. cit.*

¹⁰ Vatican Council, Session 3, chap. 3 (Denzinger, no. 1794).

¹¹ Pascal, *Thoughts*.

¹² Taine, *Les Origines de la France contemporaine*, 22d ed., XI, 146.

life. It has recently been pointed out by the renowned Protestant Professor Adolph von Harnack, who says: "In its organization this Church possesses a faculty of adapting itself to the course of history, while it always remains the same old Church." ¹³

A rapid glance will show the justice of this remark. In the three epochs through which the Church has thus far passed, her outward organization, following the laws of living organisms, has experienced the three successive phases of formation, full maturity, and decline; but her doctrine, her moral teaching, and her hierarchy always emerged with their characteristics unchanged and with a renewed vitality.

From the first century to the sixth, with the Greco-Roman world before her, the Catholic Church first unfolded her activities in the great capitals (Athens, Alexandria, Rome) and in the Roman provinces of Gaul, Africa, and Britain. This was the work of her missionaries. At the same time her apologists and doctors translated her dogmas into the philosophical language of the Greeks, set forth her moral teaching and organized her discipline with the aid of the legal terminology of Rome. The fourth century marks the height of this work. The liberty of the Church was proclaimed by the Edict of Milan in 313; the Catholic creed was settled at the Council of Nicaea in 325; Christian thought was expressed in the writings of the Church Fathers: St. Athanasius, St. Basil, St. Ambrose, St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, and St. Jerome. The next two centuries saw the break-up of the Roman Empire under the blows of the barbarians and the influence of its own corruption. This was a period of decline. St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory the Great bear anxious testimony to this decadence; but they also labored to prepare the future.

That future was in the hands of the barbarians. From the

¹³ Harnack, *What is Christianity?*, p. 257.

fifth to the sixteenth century a new society was formed, grew, and fell. The outward organization of the Church followed these different phases. After growing strong at Rome, its center, with Leo the Great and Gregory the Great, Christianity radiated to the various nations through its bishops and monks. St. Remigius converted the Franks, St. Augustine of Canterbury evangelized Britain, and St. Boniface carried the Gospel to Germany. The Church crowned her work by grouping the converted nations into a vast unit; this was the Holy Roman Empire, inaugurated by Charlemagne and Leo III, and continued under the auspices of Gregory VII and Innocent III by the rulers of Germany. The religious, social, and political organization of the thirteenth century marked the apogee of that age. It was the epoch of the Crusades, of chivalry, of Roman and Gothic art, of the great universities, of the great religious Orders, St. Dominic, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Louis. These names tell the whole story. But through the influence of many causes—the Greek Schism, the Great Schism of the West, the Renaissance, and, it must be acknowledged, numerous internal abuses—medieval society—Christianity as it was called—was dismembered. As at the time of the fall of the Roman Empire, the Church, through her popes and doctors, labored to safeguard the welfare of the world that was crumbling and also to instil her spirit into the new age that was to follow.

This is the modern period. The formation of the various European nations from the wreckage of the Holy Empire, the expansion of commerce by the discovery of America, the more rapid diffusion of thought by the invention of printing, the penetration of the ancient spirit into European arts and letters by the coming of Greek scholars who were expelled from Constantinople—these were the elements that formed the modern world. It began with a formidable heresy, Protestantism,

which wrenched from the Catholic Church a large part of Germany, separated England, and agitated France.

The Church's first care is to combat error. By the founding of new religious Orders, the most illustrious of which is the Society of Jesus, by the Council of Trent, by a new expansion of foreign missions, by the reform of her clergy under the influence of St. Charles Borromeo, by the new congregations of the Oratory, the Mission (Vincentians), and St. Sulpice, by the spread of the doctrines of the spiritual life through the influence of St. Francis de Sales, the Church strove both to combat heresy and to Christianize the modern world. There was a moment in France, under the reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV, with St. Francis de Sales and St. Vincent de Paul, Bossuet and Fénelon, Petau and Thomassin, when it seemed that the acme of modern times had come. But certain errors springing more or less consciously from Protestantism—Jansenism, Gallicanism, Quietism, Rationalism—soon paralyzed the Christian advance and paved the way for the disaster of the Revolution. Amid these unparalleled catastrophes, the Church of France was successively stripped of her ancient privileges, her rights, and her temporal possessions, persecuted in her ministers and her worship, officially replaced by a so-called national religion, and the whole world was disturbed by this terrible shock.

Did the nineteenth and twentieth centuries inaugurate a new age, or did they merely continue the decadence of the previous epoch? We are too near the events to pass judgment. As Joseph de Maistre was wont to say, "The eye does not see what touches it." But we may confidently expect new triumphs for the Church. Not to speak of the promises of the Christian faith, it seems that the study of the past must inspire the historian with confident hopes.

All the forms of society which the Church, ever since her

birth, has met along her path, all the powers that have fought against her, have, like every earthly organism, had their origin, their rise, and their decline. The Catholic Church alone, to quote Harnack again, "possesses a faculty of adapting itself to the course of history, while it always remains the same old Church."

This same "course of history" shows us the Catholic Church maintaining that in herself alone is to be found the whole of Christianity, nay, the whole of religion. There are two Christian groups that strive against her for predominance—Protestantism and the Greek Schism. The former is on the way to doctrinal dissolution; the latter appears to be held motionless in an inertia that forebodes death. As for those religions (Buddhism and Islam) whose influence and numbers can be compared with those of Christianity, the first touch of historical and philosophical criticism seems to destroy their apologetic basis and essential dogmas. The "natural religion" preached by the eighteenth century philosophers, has had its day; the positive study of the history of religions has demolished its foundation. Catholicism seems, therefore, even to those who consider it only from the viewpoint of history, to stand alone in the face of an absolute agnosticism which leads to anarchy. Which of the two will win out? "Those who will come after us will know whether the strife now preparing is really more serious than the conflicts which have gone before, whether it will end in a more glorious victory for Christianity or be the beginning of the fulfilment of the prophecies regarding the end of the world. But this uncertainty cannot disturb the confidence of the Christian believer. Whatever are to be the vicissitudes of the future, the Church's past gives sufficient proof of her divine origin. Even if we prescind from the initial force, *i. e.*, the person of her Founder, and regard Church history as beginning with the Apostles, we are forced to conclude

that they established a more than human institution, that God was really with them, and that He is still with their work,"¹⁴ sustaining it with His mighty hand and guiding it to a glorious destiny.

¹⁴ Duchesne, *Les Origines chrétiennes*, 2d ed., p. 467.

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A HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

VOLUME I

I. THE APOSTOLIC PERIOD

II. THE CONFLICT

III. THE PEACE INAUGURATED BY CONSTANTINE

Introductory Remarks

AT the time of the Savior's death eleven men of lowly station, timidly seeking refuge in an upper room in Jerusalem, formed almost the entire Church. Less than a century later, Christianity was firmly established not only in Jerusalem, but in Antioch, Rome, Athens, and Alexandria, in the chief cities of the East and West, and even among a large number of barbarous nations. To relate the advance of this marvelous expansion of the Church in the ancient world, is the main purpose of this part of the present volume.

What we speak of as the ancient world, in the time of Christ and His Apostles really comprised three different worlds. The Jewish world, with Jerusalem as its center, was intermingled with the other nations by its commercial relations, and obstinately separated from them by its beliefs. The western pagan world, with Rome and Athens as its capitals, was unified by the Greco-Roman civilization: in Rome politics and government were enthroned; in Athens art was brilliantly cultivated. The eastern pagan world, with its metaphysical speculations and religious fancies, gathered about Alexandria. Outside these centers of thought and life, Antioch, an immense city on the Syrian coast, was a meeting-place of all the ancient civilizations. Into these cities the gospel of the Carpenter of Galilee, preached by twelve unlettered men, entered, supplanted the ancient religions, and created a new world. After the conquest of these centers, when the bright light from Palestine had illumined their intellectual heights,¹ Christianity passed the frontiers of the civilized world and entered

¹ We owe this metaphor to Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*, II, iii, 1), who says: "The saving word began to flood the whole world with light like the rays of the sun."

those barbarous countries which Rome scarcely knew and which scarcely knew the Roman world, and soon the conquest of the ancient world by the religion of Jesus Christ was definitely accomplished.

Before we narrate this astonishing spread of the gospel, it will be useful briefly to recall the story of the foundation of the Church.

CHAPTER I

Jesus Christ and the Church

The Founding of the Church

"In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and Philip his brother tetrarch of Iturea and the country of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilina; under the high priests Annas and Caiphas; the word of the Lord was made unto John, the son of Zachary, in the desert. And he came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins. . . . Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that Jesus also being baptized and praying, heaven was opened; and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape as a dove upon Him; and a voice came from heaven: 'Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased.' "

IN these words the Evangelist St. Luke relates the first public manifestation of Him whom His disciples soon afterward acclaimed as "their Lord and their God," and the Church acknowledged as its Head.

Jesus had been born of the Virgin Mary about thirty years before,¹ in a stable at Bethlehem, a town in the kingdom of

¹ Probably in 749 A. U. C. We know that Herod died in 750; and the Gospel insinuates that Jesus was born a short time before. Dionysius Exiguus fixed upon the year 754 A. U. C. as the beginning of our era, but it was found that he was mistaken in his calculations. (Cf. Fouard, *The Christ, the Son of God*, I, 42 ff.) The same chronology is established by astronomical computations undertaken to determine the year of Christ's death. The work of De la Porte and Pio Emmanuelli, astronomer at the Vatican Observatory, seems to prove that the Savior's death occurred on Friday, the 7th of April, 783 A. U. C., the year 30 of our era. In that year the 14th Nisan began at about 6 o'clock on the evening of April 6. The 7th of April, 783 A. U. C., was a Friday. This coincidence did not occur in any other year between 28 and 34 of our era. (Cf. *Cosmos*, 1913, pp. 520, 565. A bibliography of this question will be found in the *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, April 15, 1913.)

Juda, as the ancient prophets had foretold. Thus far His life had been hidden from the eyes of the world; but the hour was now at hand for Him to manifest Himself.

His public ministry began on the day of His baptism. Then for three years He went about Galilee and Judea doing good. "He declares high mysteries, but confirms them by great miracles; He enjoins great virtues, but gives, at the same time, great lights, great examples, and great graces."²

The doctrine that He preached was very old and yet very new. "Every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like to a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old."³ He gathered, as in a sheaf, the religious truths and divine precepts that had been spread in the world, from the beginning, by the patriarchal and the Mosaic religion, and He supplemented them by a revelation of deeper mysteries and the preaching of more perfect virtues.

Belief in one God, the expectation of a liberator (Messias) and the hope of a restoration of Israel, were the chief foundations of the Jewish faith. Christ taught them that the God they adored was Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,⁴ that the Messias they expected was truly the Son of God,⁵ and that the restoration for which they hoped was nothing but the redemption of the world.⁶

Until then the Jews had been aroused to obedience to God by the hope of earthly rewards. "Jesus Christ sets forth to them a future life, and keeping them suspended in that expectation, He teaches them to disengage themselves from all things of sense. . . . Not satisfied with telling us that a life eternally happy was reserved for the children of God, the

² Bossuet, *The Continuity of Religion*, p. 97.

³ Matt. 13: 52.

⁴ Matt. 28: 19.

⁵ John 8: 58.

⁶ Matt. 26: 28.

Messias has also told us wherein it consists. And this is life eternal, to be with Him where He is in the glory of God the Father; life eternal is to behold the glory He has in the bosom of the Father; life eternal, in a word, is to know the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent.”⁷

“With such new rewards, Jesus Christ must propose also ideas of virtue, practices more perfect and more refined. He proposes to us the love of God even to the hating of ourselves. He proposes to us the love of our neighbor so as to extend that kind disposition towards all men. He proposes to us humility, even to the extent of loving shame for the glory of God.”⁸

Thus in the realm of morals as in that of doctrine, the old ideal is immeasurably surpassed. Is this the whole message of Christ? By no means. Those who listened to the Master soon understood that He had the future especially in mind. The second year of His ministry, His calling of the twelve Apostles and the choosing of a certain number of disciples laid the foundations of a society with Himself as the center and inspirer. At the head of the Twelve He placed Simon, the son of Jona, whom He named Peter. Peter’s primacy is “so manifest a prerogative that the Evangelists, who in the catalogue they make of the Apostles observe no certain order, unanimously agree in naming St. Peter before all the rest as the first.”⁹

Then, confronted by the misunderstanding of the populace and the ill-will of the Pharisees, the Master, in conformity with the custom of popular teaching in the East, altered the ordinary form of His discourses. Instead of direct exhortation and instruction, He now habitually made use of little figurative stories and popular parables or fables, to make His

⁷ John 17:3. Bossuet, *op. cit.*, pp. 99, 110.

⁸ Bossuet, *op. cit.*, pp. 110 f.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

thought understood or surmised. Yet the subject of a large number of these parables is a mysterious kingdom, sometimes called the kingdom of God, at other times the kingdom of the heavens. This kingdom is compared to a field where cockle, sowed by the devil, chokes the grain,¹⁰ or to a mustard seed that becomes a great tree,¹¹ or to leaven which a woman kneads in a mass of dough until all the latter is leavened,¹² or to a net which is cast into the sea and filled with all kinds of fishes.¹³

To the eyes of the disciples, the picture of this kingdom was still somewhat dim. It appeared to them in turn as something afar off and very near, as beyond this visible world and as transformed in this world. The fact is that, in the Master's thought, it is near, inasmuch as it is given in this life, but far off, inasmuch as it is consummated and perfected in the next life. In any event, it clearly appears that this future kingdom was to take the form of a society organized about Christ the King. The mother of the sons of Zebedee, understanding it in an earthly manner, asked that her sons be given places of honor in the future kingdom.

Most of the uncertainties disappeared during the forty days of intercourse which the risen Christ granted His disciples. Henceforth it is evident that the word "kingdom," so often used by the Master in the course of His earthly life, while sometimes meaning the reign of God by grace, and more often the supreme revelation of the last days, ordinarily refers to an earthly and militant society or church, with the mission of realizing in every man the individual reign of God and thereby preparing for the coming of a triumphant Church in Heaven.

Further, this Church, organized and living, is there before

¹⁰ Matt. 13 : 24-30.

¹¹ Matt. 13 : 31 f.

¹² Matt. 13 : 33.

¹³ Matt. 13 : 47-49.

the eyes of all. It is a perfect society, having received from the Master its special purpose, the salvation of the world; its essential doctrine, the gospel teaching; its sacred liturgy, centering in the Eucharist; its divine hierarchy, with degrees marked by the Sacraments of Baptism and Orders; its supreme head, designated by the Savior's special choice. Jesus said: "Simon, Bar-Jona . . . Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church. . . . And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven."¹⁴ . . . Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren."¹⁵

Jesus ascended into Heaven. No essential element seemed lacking in the divinely organized society which He left upon earth. Yet the attitude of His disciples was still timid. Abandoned to their own weakness, trembling before the Jewish police, they did nothing but pray together and piously keep in their hearts, along with the memory of the Master's conversations, the recollection of the great miracle of the Resurrection, performed to sustain their faith. They awaited the coming of the promised Comforter, because, when Jesus was leaving, He said to them: "If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."¹⁶

¹⁴ Matt. 16: 17-19.

¹⁵ Luke 22: 31 f. "The mighty words which so clearly establish Peter's primacy, also established the episcopacy. He who said to St. Peter: 'Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth . . .' said the same thing to all the Apostles. . . . But the latter promise does not annul the former. Christ's promises, as also His gifts, are not taken back. . . . The power given to several contains a restriction in its partition, whereas the power given to a single one and over all and without exception, conveys plenitude. It was the teaching of a holy bishop of Gaul that the authority in the Church was first established in the person of a single man and was extended to others only on condition of being always referred to the principle of its unity." Bossuet, *Sermon sur l'unité de l'Eglise*, in *Œuvres* (Lachat ed.), XI, 599 ff.

¹⁶ John 16: 7.

The First Pentecost

Such was the Apostles' attitude until the day of Pentecost. On that day "they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak. Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. And when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together and were confounded in mind, because that every man heard them speak in his own tongue. And they were all amazed and wondered, saying: 'Behold, are not all these that speak, Galileans? And how have we heard, every man our own tongue wherein we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews also, and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians; we have heard them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.' " ¹⁷

This long enumeration should not surprise us. The historian Josephus says that there was no nation in the world where the Jews had not established a foothold.¹⁸ Philo declares that in his time they were to be found in every important city of the Empire and even in the islands of Europe and Asia. Scattered by their conquerors, or drawn to com-

¹⁷ Acts 2: 1-11.

¹⁸ Josephus, *Jewish War*, II, xvi, 4. About 140 B. C., a Jewish poet wrote this line about his own race:

Πᾶσα δὲ γαῖα σέθεν πλήρης καὶ πᾶσα θάλασσα.

"The earth and the sea are all full of thee." (*Sibylline Oracles*, III, 271. Cf. Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, pp. 1-6; Lagrange, *Le Messianisme chez les Juifs*, pp. 273-284.)

mercial cities by their mercantile spirit, the children of Israel had penetrated almost everywhere. This dispersion seems to have been providential; in the midst of idolatrous peoples, the Jews had sturdily maintained the two essential doctrines of their religion: belief in one God and hope for a Messias. Thereby Judaism was preparing the world to receive the teaching of Christ.

Although the Jews were scattered in the world, they loved to come home to strengthen their faith at the traditional feasts of their nation. It is not surprising, therefore, that the feast of Pentecost, at the end of the harvest time, drew a large number of them to Jerusalem.

These men of foreign speech were astounded at the miracle of Pentecost. The believers among them humbly glorified the God of their fathers. Others, in a spirit of skepticism or raillery, exclaimed: "These men are full of new wine."

But the chief of the Twelve arose—Simon Peter, to whom Jesus had shortly before entrusted the care of feeding the lambs and the sheep. "Ye men of Judea," he said, "and all you that dwell in Jerusalem, be this known to you, and with your ears receive my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose. . . . But this is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel. . . . 'I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.' " ¹⁹ "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him, in the midst of you, as you also know: this same being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you by the hands of wicked men have crucified and slain. Whom God hath raised up having loosed the sorrows of hell, as it was impossible that He should be holden by it." ²⁰

¹⁹ Acts 2: 14-17.

²⁰ Acts 2: 22-24.

Thus, at the very moment when the most genuine inspiration of the Divine Spirit enlightens his soul, the Apostle Peter, representative and head of the teaching Church, rests his whole preaching upon a fact and upon a truth. The fact is that of the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth who, having been put to death before the whole people, came forth triumphantly from the tomb. The truth, suggested by this deed, is the right of that Jesus to an immortal survival, for "it was impossible that He should be holden by the bonds of death," and He already begins to show how He survives in the souls of His faithful followers and in the authority of His Church. With mounting enthusiasm, Peter cries out: "This Jesus hath God raised again, whereof all we are witnesses. Being exalted therefore by the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath poured forth this which you see and hear."²¹

Even while Peter was speaking, the Holy Ghost performed in the hearts of the listeners another prodigy, of a kind different from the gift of tongues bestowed on the eleven Apostles. An all-powerful inner grace, such as that spoken of by Christ when He said, "No man can come to Me, except the Father, who hath sent Me, draw him,"²² transformed their souls. Addressing Peter and the other Apostles, some cried out: "What shall we do, men and brethren?" "Do penance," Peter answered, "and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ." He thus pointed out the twofold condition required for initiation into the Christian life and for salvation. That condition is both interior and exterior; it includes a disposition of the soul and a ceremony performed by the priest in the name of Christ. The essential characteristics of the Catholic Church could not be announced more clearly and

²¹ Acts 2: 32 f.

²² John 6: 44.

precisely, and this at the very moment when the Church was born.²³

This Pentecost has always been regarded by the Catholic Church as the date of her birth. On that day the rites of the Old Law lapsed²⁴ and the New Law became of universal obligation.

At Peter's words, three thousand persons were converted and baptized. Of these three thousand converts, some bore the gospel seed to the various countries where they lived, others formed the nucleus of the Church at Jerusalem.

²³ In the *Theologische Literaturzeitung* of January 16, 1909, Dr. Adolph von Harnack, the most illustrious German church historian of our day, acknowledges that "some of the principal elements of Catholicism go back to the Apostolic age" and that "it is possible to establish, by impressive proofs, that the Catholic concept of the infant Church is historically the true one, *i. e.*, that Christianity, Catholicism, and Romanism are, in the light of history, perfectly identical." This was the first time that a Protestant theologian uttered a proposition so diametrically opposed to the traditional contention of his Church. It merits special attention because of Harnack's particular competency. True, he restricts his declaration by adding that "the chasm that separates Jesus from the Apostles has not yet been bridged over," and that "the hierarchy of the factors at work within the complex organism of Christian thought and the forms of ecclesiastical life were constantly changing." But the importance of his general declaration is great. Harnack's article is reproduced almost in its entirety and critically examined by Batiffol in his *Primitive Catholicism*, particularly pages ix ff., 94-113.

²⁴ Hurter, *Theologia dogmatica; De Ecclesia*, thesis 37, no. 281.

CHAPTER II

The Early Church and the Jews (30-42)

OUR Lord in His sermons and parables repeatedly announced that the kingdom of God, rejected by the Jews, would be accepted by the Gentiles. But the Israelites, none the less, remained the chosen people, the nation "of the promise." It was at Jerusalem, in a group belonging to the Jewish race, that the Church had its cradle. The earliest disciples of Christ religiously followed most of the Jewish observances, and withdrew from them only gradually and with utmost respect. The Synagogue, after the defections of its children, was buried with honor.

How great had been the destinies of the children of Abraham and Jacob before God and man! Yahweh, by His covenant with them, by the prophets He raised up in the midst of their nation, by the numerous wonders He performed for them during the ages, had done for them what He had done for no other people. On their part, scattered as they were throughout the nations, they had remained faithful to the two great doctrines which the Lord had entrusted to their safe-keeping: belief in one God and the hope of a Messias. Athens might lay claim to the glory of unparalleled art; Rome, to that of incomparable political science; but Jerusalem was the center of the purest worship that had been offered to the Divinity.

Jerusalem

The Roman domination, established in Judea in 63 B. C., did not result in depriving the Jewish people entirely of their

independence. Under the rule of the Herods, the children of Israel had kept a partial autonomy, which enabled them to remain faithful to the religion revealed to their fathers, and to celebrate, in the Temple at Jerusalem, the great ceremonies handed down by their ancestors. Baleful domestic divisions, however, had imbroiled the nation. The party that was preponderant in numbers as well as in the prestige of its members, was always that of the Pharisees.¹ Of these meticulous observers of the Law, some were hypocrites, like those on whom Christ heaped maledictions; others were pure and upright, like those who braved all human respect to follow Him. There were, besides, the pleasure-loving Sadducees and the ambitious Herodians, fond of an easy life, who gladly accepted the customs and practices of Greece and Rome.² At the opposite extreme were the Essenes. These visionary fanatics haughtily looked down on the other sects and considered themselves as the sole heirs of the heavenly promises. They endeavored to realize a superhuman purity.³ The strictest of the Essenes made a point of not going to the Temple, for they held it to be stained by their degenerate fellow-Jews; but in this they were not followed by the body of the nation. For the people of Israel the Temple remained the sacred place where the Jewish nation offered its traditional sacrifices, aware of its great supernatural mission. They were proud of this noble edifice; its rebuilding, begun by Herod the Great, was not completed until the year 64, by Agrippa II. When a son of Israel, standing at the top of Mount Olivet, surveyed the gigantic wall which made the Temple look like an enormous fortress, the whole series of intercommunicating terraces, and at the summit the sanctuary itself, and its roof, covered

¹ Beurlier, *Le Monde juif au temps de Jésus-Christ*, I, 44-47. Cf. Stapfer, *Palestine in the Time of Christ*, pp. 265-284; Döllinger, *The Gentile and the Jew*, II, 304 ff.

² Beurlier, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

³ *Idem*, p. 48.

with gold plates, reflecting the sun,⁴ his national pride was exalted; a grim irritation stirred in his soul against the foreign usurper; the memory of the heroic Machabees who, a century earlier, had won back the Temple and religious liberty in Palestine, enkindled in his breast both patriotism and religion.

The faithful disciples who had been won from the ranks of the Jewish people by Christ's preaching and the prodigies of Pentecost, shared in these noble feelings. Following the example of their Divine Master,⁵ they regularly went up to the Temple and mingled in the crowd of the worshippers. "For them the new religion was not the foe of the old, but its fruit. They rightly judged that the holy souls of both Testaments—the Old and the New—really formed one and the same Church about one and the same Messias, misunderstood by some, acclaimed by others, but the sole object of Israel's hopes. . . . To God, the Author of the Old Covenant, it pertained to signify to all, by permitting the destruction of the Temple and the nationality of Israel, that the legal end of Mosaism had come."⁶

The Miracle at the Beautiful Gate

Meanwhile the Apostles preached with extraordinary success. A few days after the baptism of the three thousand Pentecostal converts, two thousand persons joined the Church following a miracle which is related in the Acts of the Apostles.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon. Peter and John had gone up to the Temple to pray.

⁴ On the Temple at Jerusalem, see art. "*Temple*" in the *Dict. de la Bible*. Cf. Vogué, *Le Temple de Jérusalem*; Perrot and Chipiez, *Histoire de l'art dans l'antiquité*, IV, 205-211; Stapfer, *op. cit.*, pp. 403-453.

⁵ St. Thomas, *Summa theol.*, III, q. 37; q. 40, 4, 0; q. 47, 2 ad 1.

⁶ Le Camus, *L'Œuvre des apôtres*, I, 46.

"A certain man who was lame from his mother's womb, was carried : whom they laid every day at the gate of the Temple, which is called Beautiful, that he might ask alms of them that went into the Temple. He, when he had seen Peter and John about to go into the Temple, asked to receive an alms. But Peter with John fastening his eyes upon him said : 'Look upon us.' But he looked earnestly upon them, hoping that he should receive something of them. But Peter said : 'Silver and gold I have none ; but what I have, I give thee : In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk.' And taking him by the right hand, he lifted him up, and forthwith his feet and soles received strength. And he leaping up stood and walked and went in with them into the Temple, walking and praising God. And they knew him, that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple ; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened to him. And as he held Peter and John, all the people ran to them to the porch which is called Solomon's greatly wondering.

"But Peter seeing, made answer to the people : 'Ye men of Israel, why wonder you at this ? or why look you upon us, as if by our strength or power we had made this man to walk ? The God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus, whom you indeed delivered up and denied before the face of Pilate, when he judged He should be released. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you. But the author of life you killed, whom God hath raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And in the faith of His name, this man whom you have seen and known, hath His name strengthened ; and the faith which is by Him, hath given this perfect soundness in the sight of you all. And now, brethren, I know that you did it through ignorance, as did also your rulers. But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled. Be penitent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. That when the times of refreshment shall come from the presence of the Lord, and He shall send Him who hath been preached unto you, Jesus Christ, whom heaven indeed must receive, until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the

mouth of His holy prophets, from the beginning of the world. . . . To you first God, raising up His Son, hath sent Him to bless you; that every one may convert himself from his wickedness.' ” ⁷

The Apostle was still speaking when the priests who were on duty in the Temple arrived. They were accompanied by a group of Sadducees. The disciples of Christ had no more bitter enemies than these sectaries, one of whose principal tenets was the denial of the resurrection of the dead. Upon hearing the doctrine of survival being preached, not merely as a hope, but as a truth established by the Resurrection of Christ, they became furiously angry. They remarked to the priests that addressing the people in the porch of the house of God, without commission from the hierarchical authority, was an act of culpable boldness. To seize the two Apostles and hurry them off to prison was the work of a moment. It was evening, too late for a trial, and hence further proceedings were postponed to the next day. But many who heard Peter's discourse believed in Christ. The infant Church of Jerusalem was now made up of five thousand men.

On the following day the leaders of the people, the ancients and the scribes, met together. In this gathering were to be seen the High Priest Annas,⁸ Caiphas, John, and Alexander.⁹ In full numbers the court assembled, which had but recently condemned the Master; it would now try the disciples.

The judges, placing Peter and John in their midst, asked: “By what power or by what name have you done this?” ¹⁰ The scene, despite its simplicity, was one of unparalleled im-

⁷ Acts 3: 1-26.

⁸ A long time before, the Romans had removed Annas from the office of High Priest and had bestowed it upon Caiphas. But the Jews considered this office inalienable; and no real Jew would concede that any foreign power had a right to remove the High Priest. Annas, therefore, retained the title of High Priest, although he no longer performed the duties of the office.

⁹ Acts 4: 5 f.

¹⁰ Acts 4: 7.

portance. For the first time the lowly disciples of Christ, "illiterate and ignorant men," ¹¹ stood in the presence of those hostile powers of which their Master had given them a glimpse. But the heavenly aid which had been promised did not fail them. The presiding officer of the Sanhedrin did not dare say "miracle" or "cure." He called the prodigy "this."

The Acts tell us that Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, turned a simple and direct look upon his judges, and said to them:

"Ye princes of the people and ancients, hear. If we this day are examined concerning the good deed done to the infirm man, by what means he hath been made whole, be it known to you all and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead, even by Him this man standeth here before you whole. This is the stone which was rejected by you the builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved." ¹²

"Seeing the constancy of Peter and of John, understanding that they were illiterate and ignorant men, they wondered. And they knew then that they had been with Jesus. Seeing the man also who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But they commanded them to go aside out of the council; and they conferred among themselves. . . . And calling them, they charged them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." ¹³

To impose silence on the two Apostles, to hinder the divulging of a fact which glorified the name of Jesus—such was the only penalty which the persecuting despots found.

But Peter, aided by the Holy Ghost, did not yield. He replied: "If it be just in the sight of God, to hear you rather

¹¹ Acts 4: 13.

¹² Acts 4: 8-12.

¹³ Acts 4: 13-18.

than God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." The *Non possumus*, so often repeated by Peter's successors before the powers of this world, was heard for the first time in the precincts of a court. The religious chiefs of Jerusalem might well, on that day, have convinced themselves that a new power had arisen on earth. The Master had said: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God, the things that are God's."

The members of the Sanhedrin did not know what to do with the Apostles. "They threatening, sent them away, not finding how they might punish them, because of the people; for all men glorified what had been done, in that which had come to pass." ¹⁴

The First Christians

As soon as the Apostles were released, they returned to their brethren and related to them what the chief priests and the ancients had said.

"Who having heard it, with one accord lifted up their voice to God and said: 'Lord, Thou art He that didst make heaven and earth, the sea and all things that are in them. Who, by the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of our father David, Thy servant, hast said: "Why did the Gentiles rage, and the people meditate vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes assembled together against the Lord and His Christ." . . . And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto Thy servants that with all confidence they may speak Thy word, by stretching forth Thy hand to cures and signs and wonders to be done by the name of Thy holy Son Jesus.' And when they had prayed, the place was moved wherein they were assembled; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the word of God with confidence.

"And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul; neither did any one say that aught of the things which he possessed

¹⁴ Acts 4: 21.

was his own; but all things were common unto them. And with great power did the Apostles give testimony of the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. And great grace was in them all. For neither was there any one needy among them. For as many as were owners of lands or houses, sold them and brought the price of the things sold, and laid it down before the feet of the Apostles. And distribution was made to every one, according as he had need.”¹⁵

In these few lines the Acts of the Apostles sketches the first Christian community. Let us attempt to complete the picture with the help of various documents furnished by archeology, tradition, sacred and profane history.

It is plainly to be seen that the little society has a head. This head is the one who, after the Ascension, presided at the choosing of Matthias to replace Judas, so as to fill up the number of the Twelve. He is also the one who, on Pentecost, spoke to the crowd in the name of the Apostolic College. And it is he who defended the rights of Christian preaching before the Sanhedrin. It is Simon, son of Jona, to whom Jesus gave the power of binding and loosing, that is, of governing His Church; it is Peter, to whom were given the keys of the kingdom and who was commissioned to “confirm his brethren” in the faith.

The Galilean fisherman’s burning faith, the promptness of his zeal, the clear-sighted intuition of his soul, which led him first of all to proclaim his belief in Christ the Son of the living God, and the thrice repeated avowal of his love for Jesus, may have prepared him for this office; in fact, he received it by the free choice of his Master. And this headship was religiously recognized and accepted by all. The Pauline tradition, represented by St. Luke,¹⁶ and the Johannine tradition, represented by the Fourth Gospel,¹⁷ as also the Pales-

¹⁵ Acts 4: 23-35.

¹⁶ Luke 22: 31.

¹⁷ John 21: 15-17.

tinian tradition, echoed in St. Matthew,¹⁸ and the Roman tradition, expressed in St. Mark, agree in representing Simon Peter as the head of the infant Church.

At the same time another authority seems to hover over the community of Christ's disciples: it is the authority of the Holy Ghost. Nothing in the Acts of the Apostles is more remarkable than the frequency with which that book mentions the Holy Ghost. Every important event in the infant Church¹⁹ is attributed to His inspiration.

The name of the Holy Ghost is one of the first words on Peter's lips when for the first time he addresses the disciples, gathered together to choose a successor for Judas the traitor.²⁰ From the Holy Ghost the Apostles receive the gift of tongues.²¹ To the Holy Ghost Peter attributes all the supernatural manifestations on Pentecost.²² The Apostle charges Ananias with having lied to the Holy Ghost,²³ and Saphira with having tempted the Spirit of the Lord.²⁴ Stephen, the first martyr, is spoken of as a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost,²⁵ as one by whose mouth the Spirit of God speaks.²⁶ Later on we note that the Holy Ghost sets apart Paul and Barnabas,²⁷ and prevents Paul and Silas from passing into Asia.²⁸

And this Spirit is represented as a Spirit of peace, of charity, and of joy.²⁹ Under His influence, and under the paternal

¹⁸ Matt. 16: 18.

¹⁹ Lebreton, *Histoire du dogme de la Trinité*, I, 284-288.

²⁰ Acts 1: 16.

²¹ Acts 2: 2 ff.

²² Acts 2: 17.

²³ Acts 5: 3.

²⁴ Acts 5: 9.

²⁵ Acts 6: 5.

²⁶ Acts 6: 10.

²⁷ Acts 13: 2, 4.

²⁸ Acts 16: 6. The Acts of the Apostles has been called the "Gospel of the Holy Ghost." Cf. Lebreton, *op. cit.*, I, 285.

²⁹ Acts 13: 52.

authority of the head of the Apostles, the young community is organized and develops as a united family. A superficial outsider might have observed in them only a group of pious Jews, or a community of cenobites like the Essenes and Therapeutae.³⁰ They still kept the Mosaic observances, prayed at the appointed hours,³¹ and showed themselves scrupulously faithful to the Law. They were liked by the people because of their simple, pious, and gentle life.³² This the chief priests had seen at the time of the arrest of Peter and John. From the little group there radiated a fragrance of kindliness, uprightness, and wholesome joy. Among them labor was held in honor, in their midst the destitute found the charm of an enlarged family which generously opened for them all its treasures of affection and its material resources. The members of the community called one another brothers, to show the tender charity that united them. The Temple porches, the galleries that formed part of that edifice, were their usual meeting-place during the day.³³ There were to be found the memories of their Master's most endearing words and discourses. In the evening they returned to their lodgings and, in small groups,³⁴ took part in a mysterious meal that still more intimately recalled to their mind the last hours of Jesus. The people called their meeting by the Hebrew word *Kahal*, which was applied to gatherings of this sort; but they themselves used the Greek word *Ekklesia* (Church), by which the old Hellenic cities designated the meeting of the people for deliberation on matters of state.

³⁰ On the religious societies of Essenes and Therapeutae, see Hergenröther-Kirsch, *Kirchengeschichte*, vol. I, bk. I, chap. 2. Cf. Philo, *On the Contemplative Life*; also Massebiau, "Le Traité de la vie contemplative et la question des thérapeutes," in the *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 1887, pp. 170, 284.

³¹ Acts 3: 1.

³² Acts 2: 47; 4: 33; 5: 13, 26.

³³ Acts 2: 46; 5: 12.

³⁴ Acts 2: 46.

The Organization of the Church

Let us examine the inner life of this Church more closely. There we shall discover an autonomous organization, capable of sustaining its life independently, should the Jewish people some day break away from Christ.

The Apostles exercised an undisputed authority over the faithful. They had been the Savior's confidants, specially chosen by Him to accompany Him and aid Him. Hence, in the mind of the new converts, they are the authentic witnesses of the departed Master. To them one turns for an authorized account of His discourses, promises, blessings, and examples. The mystery of Pentecost, by designating them as in a very special manner filled with the Holy Ghost, and the gift of miracles, which is more particularly reserved to them,³⁵ vests them with an altogether exceptional authority. When Peter passes by, the sick are carried out and put on beds or cots, so that his shadow may fall upon them.³⁶ Such privileges made their authority absolute and their teaching infallible.³⁷ Moreover, Christ had in a positive manner confided to them the power of teaching,³⁸ and, subject to Peter's authority, the power of governing the faithful.³⁹

It is possible that, under the Apostles, the community had for a short time only the ministry of prophets directly inspired by the Holy Ghost. But if this embryonic state ever existed, it lasted only a very short time."⁴⁰ The Apostles soon instituted a governing authority, which was frequently entrusted to those who were favored with these mystical communications. A council of elders (*presbyteri*, priests) and a college of seven deacons later completed the organization.

³⁵ Acts 5: 12.

³⁶ Acts 5: 15.

³⁷ Bainvel, art. "*Apôtres*," in Vacant's *Dict. de théol.*

³⁸ Matt. 28: 18 ff.; Mark 16: 15.

³⁹ Matt. 18: 17 f.; Ephes. 4: 1-13. Cf. 1 Cor. 12: 28; 1 Pet. 5: 2; Acts 20: 28.

⁴⁰ Prat, art. "*Evêque*" in the *Dict. de théol.*, IV, 1657.

After the other Apostles dispersed, James "the brother of the Lord" took their place at Jerusalem and filled the office of head of the local Church. At his death (A. D. 61), a successor was appointed; he was likewise a relative of the Lord, Simeon, who lived until about the year 110. "This Jerusalem hierarchy presents exactly the grades of rank which, later on, became universal."⁴¹

A close examination of the early Church at Jerusalem shows that, besides the exercises of devotion in the Temple, which the disciples of Jesus attended along with their Jewish brethren, they had their own special services in private houses, where their meetings were held. There the Master's life and discourses were repeated. "These various accounts, a thousand times retold, finally led to a uniform oral version, which was a sort of traditional catechism. The Gospel thus assumed its first authentic and authorized form. We have no need to look for any other cause for the identity of expressions and turns of phrase that characterize the three synoptic Gospels."⁴² More precisely, this early preaching took two forms, which it borrowed from the traditions of the synagogue: the *agada*, a kind of historical narrative or discourse, and the *alaka*, a form of dogmatic or moral teaching.⁴³ The synoptic Gospels are related to the *agada*; the Apostolic epistles belong rather to the form of the *alaka*, and the Gospel of St. John to both.

Doctrine

The doctrine of the new religion was at first contained entirely in these accounts and teachings. A speculative theology

⁴¹ Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, p. 63. The author supposes James, "the brother of the Lord," to be distinct from James the Apostle, the son of Alphaeus. This distinction, though held by a number of modern scholars, does not seem to be well founded. (See Ermoni, art. "*Jacques*" in the *Dict. de la Bible*.)

⁴² Le Camus, *L'Œuvre des apôtres*, I, 41.

⁴³ Vigouroux, *Manuel biblique*, I, 338.

would have taken no hold upon minds so little prepared to receive it. Yet we can distinguish with clearness and precision the three chief dogmas that emerged from the faith of this early period: the Incarnation, the Trinity, and the Redemption.

From the very first the faithful believed firmly in the Incarnation of the Son of God. "The declarations of St. Paul, St. John, and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews only expanded the common belief, which, though at that time still wanting in power of expression, was deep and unyielding. . . . The essence of this belief was in the souls of Christians from the first. . . . The early Christian books all take this fundamental belief for granted, as universally accepted and firmly rooted in tradition."⁴⁴

Belief in the dogma of the Trinity is equally clear. "To admit that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are God, is to admit that they participate in the very essence of the One God, that they are, each of them, identical with Him, yet without being deprived of certain special characteristics. This is the Christian doctrine of the Trinity; not certainly, as it was formulated later, in opposition to transient heresies, but as it appealed to the general conscience of the early Christians, and claimed the homage of their faith. The generality of Christians in the first century, even in Apostolic days, stood here almost exactly at the same point as present-day Christians."⁴⁵ "But Jesus is not only the Messiah and the Son of God, He is also the Savior. . . . He is their Redeemer, and it is by His death on the Cross that He has won His rights over them. We must not think that this conception, upon which St. Paul insists so often and so strongly, is merely the result of his own personal reflections. . . . St. Paul tells us ⁴⁶ that, find-

⁴⁴ Duchesne, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

⁴⁶ Gal. 2:1 f.

ing himself at Jerusalem after his first mission, he communicated to the leaders of the Church, to Peter, James, and John, as well as to the others, the gospel which he had taught the Gentiles, in order, he says, not to 'run in vain.' . . . As his statement was not disputed, we must conclude that the redeeming efficacy of the Lord's death was from that time acknowledged by the Apostles." ⁴⁷

It is, then, true to say that, although Christianity has its roots in the Jewish tradition, from the very first days it passes beyond that tradition and is distinguished from it, like a powerful shoot animated by a new sap. It keeps the sacred books of the Old Testament in order to clarify and supplement them in the light of a faith proper to itself. And this faith rests neither upon a collective mystical inspiration nor upon a purely internal illumination of each individual, but upon a solid teaching that constitutes the Apostles' message, which they communicate and impose with authority on every member of the Christian community. It is Tradition, the *Paradosis*, or Teaching of the Apostles, the *Didache tôn apostólôn*.⁴⁸ This rule of faith is based, in the last analysis, on the divine authority of Jesus. He is the Christ; He is the Lord. As Christ, He is the realization of Israel's Messianic hope; as Lord, He is the Voice, the very Word of the heavenly Father, who declared Him to be such on the day of His first manifestation: "This is My beloved Son; hear Him." ⁴⁹

The Liturgy

The autonomy of the Christian Church showed itself also in its ceremonies. "The Acts of the Apostles distinctly acquaints us with three of these rites: Baptism, imposition of

⁴⁷ Duchesne, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

⁴⁸ Acts 2:42.

⁴⁹ Matt. 3:17, Luke 9:35. On Tradition as the rule of faith in the early Church, see Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, *passim*.

hands, breaking of bread. Even if we suppose, as has been somewhat gratuitously asserted at times, that these three ceremonies were in use in Israel already before the time of Christ, they were practiced in the Christian community according to the very special manner taught by the Apostles and with a specifically Christian meaning. It was a Baptism 'in the name of the Lord Jesus'; it was an imposition of hands 'to confer the Holy Ghost'; it was the breaking of bread 'renewing the mystery of the Last Supper.' ” ⁵⁰

In the first place, we see that no one can be admitted to the community without going through a ceremony of initiation; it is a liturgical ablution, the Baptism of water. Even though the candidate were already favored with a direct effusion of the Holy Ghost, he is not dispensed from the sacramental rite. After the example of the Divine Master, who willed to receive a similar initiation from the Precursor, the catechumen goes down into a stream of water, as did the eunuch of Queen Candace,⁵¹ or the water is poured upon his head, as must have been the case when the Apostle St. Paul received Baptism at the hands of Ananias ⁵² and when St. Paul himself baptized his jailer in prison.⁵³ This rite signifies death to profane life and birth in a new life that will incorporate the candidate with Christ by making him a member of the Church. St. Paul speaks of the burial accomplished by baptism; ⁵⁴ and tradition has always referred to the baptismal rite the words of Jesus to Nicodemus, when He spoke to him about the necessity of being born again. So the Church requires of the neophyte the fulfilment of two preliminary con-

⁵⁰ Yves de la Brière, art. "Eglise" in the *Dict. apol. de la foi catholique*, I, 1252.

⁵¹ Act 8:26-38; 10:44-48; 11:15-17. It would seem that at the beginning Baptism was habitually administered by immersion, only occasionally by pouring. (See Vacant's *Dict. de théol.*, II, 171.)

⁵² Acts 9:18.

⁵³ Acts 16:33.

⁵⁴ Rom. 6:4.

ditions: repentance and faith. On Pentecost, Peter said: "Do penance, and be baptized."⁵⁵ To the eunuch of Queen Candace, Philip the deacon said: "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest" be baptized.⁵⁶ When all these conditions are fulfilled, the neophyte, putting off the old man, sees the new man born in him, with the inner grace and the indelible character of the Christian. Henceforth he belongs to a race of "saints";⁵⁷ he can say that he is of a "kingly priesthood,"⁵⁸ and even of "the offspring of God."⁵⁹

Thus the Apostles sought to make the unique and transcendent character of Christian Baptism stand out. They contrasted it with the baptism of John and were wont to call it "the Baptism of Jesus."⁶⁰ So great was their insistence on this point that some writers have questioned whether the primitive formula of Baptism was not: "I baptize you in the name of Jesus."⁶¹ This opinion must be rejected; the Apostles' insistence on the use of such expressions is sufficiently explained by their desire to indicate clearly the distinctive character of Christian Baptism.

The imposition of hands perfects the special quality of the Christian by conferring upon him the Holy Ghost. In Samaria, Peter and John met some of the inhabitants who had been converted and baptized by Philip the deacon, and imposed hands on them to confer the Holy Ghost.⁶² St. Paul, when he found some disciples of John the Baptist, first baptized

⁵⁵ Acts 2:38.

⁵⁶ Acts 8:37.

⁵⁷ Rom. 15:26.

⁵⁸ See 1 Pet. 2:9.

⁵⁹ Acts 17:28.

⁶⁰ Acts 2:38; 8:12; 10:48; 19:5.

⁶¹ *V. g.*, Peter Lombard and Cajetan. St. Thomas (*Summa theol.*, III, q. 66, art. 6, ad 1) restricts the validity of this formula to the first century, and thinks that the Apostles made use of a special dispensation in substituting it for the ordinary formula.

⁶² Acts 8:12-18.

them, and then imposed hands on them.⁶³ Theologians consider this ceremony to be the Sacrament of Confirmation. In the Apostolic age, marvelous signs, often called "charismata," accompanied the outpouring of the Holy Ghost.

The Spirit speaks by the mouth of the newly confirmed; the Spirit prophesies the future; the Spirit gives them commands, raises their arms, enlightens their view; the Spirit manifests Himself in visions, ecstasies, prayers, and devout hymns. The Spirit pours Himself out in strange and at times inexplicable gifts, like the gift of tongues.⁶⁴ The Epistle to the Hebrews appeals to God's testimony to His Church "by signs and wonders and divers miracles, and distributions of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will."⁶⁵ We are here in the presence of those mystical gifts which, by their essential quality, are above all the endeavors and efforts of man⁶⁶ and depend solely upon God's good pleasure. We know that the rule to be followed by those whom God favors with such states, is to subordinate all these extraordinary ways to the authority of the Church.⁶⁷ We might also remark that the gifts bestowed by the Holy Ghost upon the early Christians do not differ essentially from those which God later gave to His great mystics, such as Francis of Assisi, Catherine of Siena, and Teresa of Jesus, and that the Church since then has never met with such frequent and extraordinary graces. Those mystical gifts lasted but a short time in the Apostolic age and were subordinated to two principles: the faith authentically received, and common edification.⁶⁸ St. Paul

⁶³ Acts 19:1-6.

⁶⁴ For the theologians' explanations and those of the Rationalists, see Prat, *La Théologie de saint Paul*, I, 175-184; Lesêtre, art. "Langues" in the *Dict. de la Bible*, IV, 74-81.

⁶⁵ Heb. 2:3 f.

⁶⁶ St. Teresa, *Way of Perfection*, chap. 32.

⁶⁷ St. John of the Cross, *Ascent of Carmel*, bk. 2, chap. 30.

⁶⁸ Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, pp. 28 f.

writes: "Though an angel from heaven preach a gospel to you besides that which we preached to you, let him be anathema. . . . If any seem to be a prophet or spiritual, let him know the things that I write to you, that they are the commandments of the Lord."⁶⁹ So far as we are able to conjecture, the sole purpose of God in lavishing such abundant and striking gifts upon His Church was to signify plainly that a new society had come into being, marked with the seal of truth and manifestly aided by the Divine Spirit.

But we have not yet penetrated into the most sacred sanctuary of the infant Church. When towards evening groups of disciples were "breaking bread from house to house," and "persevering in prayer,"⁷⁰ they knew they were performing the most solemn and touching ceremony of their religion. When celebrating the Last Supper with His disciples, Jesus had commanded them to renew the memory of it. They were faithful to this command. Their rite had nothing in common with those fraternal "agapes" in use among the members of the various societies and corporations in the Greco-Roman world. The meals of charity, or Christian agapes, were not introduced into the Church until later on. The religious meal of which we are here speaking, was simply the commemoration of the one which the Savior took with His disciples the day before His death. The change made by Jesus in the celebration of the Jewish Pasch divided it into two distinct parts, the first being merely a preparation for the second. From that first part, the disciples of Christ kept, not the symbolic food courses, which they replaced by others, but only the prayer formulas. It was concerning this first common meal, to which each one brought his share, that St. Paul refers when he directs that the rich wait for the arrival of the poor, so that

⁶⁹ Gal. 1:8; 1 Cor. 14:37.

⁷⁰ Acts 2:42-46. Cf. 1 Cor. 10:16-21; 11:23 ff.

there may not be the scandal of some eating abundantly and others have nothing to eat.⁷¹

At the close of this meal the celebration of the Eucharist, properly so called, began.⁷² By Baptism the Christian felt that he was incorporated in the mystical person of Christ surviving in the Church; by Confirmation his soul was penetrated by the action of the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier. In the Eucharist, it is Jesus Himself, present under the species of bread and wine, who is united with the Christian in the closest manner. The new convert felt himself, in a way, the equal of the disciple who rested on the breast of the beloved Savior. Unspeakable mystery! It appeared so great, it so reached the inmost fibers of the heart, that it was not spoken of in the presence of the profane. Instinctively, by a common accord, the early Christians observed this law of the "secret," which safeguarded their worship from sacrilegious profanations and indiscreet curiosity.⁷³ Further, "in this mystery the Church would find an indelible line of demarcation, separating her from Mosaism. Whether or not the disciples felt this from the very first, the Cross arose more and more inexorably between them and the Jews, casting the latter behind and ordering the Christians to advance. Jesus' death was the crime of the Jews and the salvation of the Christians. . . . It was the Cross that destroyed the Synagogue and built up the Church, and its living and efficacious memorial is nothing other than the Eucharist."⁷⁴

⁷¹ On the Eucharist and the agape among the early Christians, see Batiffol, *Études d'histoire et de théologie positive*, 1st ser., pp. 283-325; Funk, "Agape" in the *Revue d'hist. ecclés.*, 1903; Leclercq, art. "Agape" in the *Dict. de théol.*

⁷² We may see in our present beginning of the Mass the continuation of this portion of the primitive rite.

⁷³ The *disciplina arcani* was not a legislative measure of ecclesiastical authority, as was long supposed, but a simple custom. There was no hesitation in departing from it whenever there seemed to be a good reason for so doing. See Batiffol, *Études d'histoire et de théologie positive*, 1st ser., pp. 1-41.

⁷⁴ Le Camus, *L'Œuvre des apôtres*, I, 44.

The Church and the Civil Government

Though separated from the Jewish and the pagan world by their hierarchy, beliefs, and rites, the disciples of Christ had no wish to adopt an attitude of rebellion or sullenness in the society in which they lived. St. Paul, in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, writes: "They are Hebrews; so am I. They are Israelites; so am I."⁷⁵ And when the tribune of Rome asked him, "Art thou a Roman?" he proudly answered: "Yea."⁷⁶ "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's,"⁷⁷ Christ had said; the Apostle adds: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers; for there is no power but from God."⁷⁸

The temporal powers with which the infant Church came in contact were the leaders of the Jewish nation and the Roman emperors. Forty years before the Christian era the title king of Judea became the prerogative of the family of the Herods, who, thanks to the backing of the Romans, supplanted the Machabees. The scepter was gone forth from Juda; a stranger reigned in the promised land. No doubt the policy of the Herods tended to constitute an independent realm, its unity assured by Judaism; but, to accomplish this purpose, they needed the protection of Rome; hence their equivocal attitude. The summary appointment and removal of high priests, which they subordinated to the varying needs of their political calculations, lowered the standing of the priesthood, and their deference to the Roman authorities favored the introduction of pagan customs into Palestine.⁷⁹

The early Christians took a clear and frank attitude toward

⁷⁵ See 2 Cor. 11:22.

⁷⁶ Acts 22:25-28.

⁷⁷ Matt. 22:21.

⁷⁸ Rom. 13:1.

⁷⁹ On the political organization of Palestine at this period, see Beurlier, *Le Monde juif à l'époque de Jésus-Christ*, and Mommsen, *History of Rome*, IV, 158.

the government and the laws; they celebrated the national feasts and holidays,⁸⁰ taking part in the Temple worship and the synagogue devotions,⁸¹ and carefully avoiding every legal defilement.⁸² They obeyed all the laws, whether fiscal or other, and, save for disputes arising among themselves—which they reserved to the judgment of their community—they carried their cases to the regular civil tribunals. This strict loyalty won the people's esteem and admiration.⁸³

Rome's protectorate in Palestine was not clearly defined. It was represented at Jerusalem by a procurator, who reserved to himself the *ius gladii*, or the judgment of important matters. But he rarely exercised this supreme right and often, like Pilate, followed the policy of non-intervention, being disinclined to place his power at the service of the local parties and priestly grudges.

The Christians' attitude toward the imperial laws and authorities was as loyal as it was toward the Jewish authorities. They paid the taxes levied for the Roman metropolis; they obeyed their masters, if they were slaves;⁸⁴ if they were Roman citizens, they did not hesitate to exercise their right to appeal their case to the tribunal of Rome.⁸⁵

But the authorities, Jewish as well as Roman, soon manifested their hostility against the Christians. The Romans, according to their custom, showed themselves more cautious on Palestinian territory; but the ill-restrained hatred of the priestly caste, who had put Jesus to death, quickly burst forth against His disciples.

The Sadducean family of the high priest, which brought about the condemnation of Christ, was still in power. Up to

⁸⁰ Acts 2:1; 18:18; 20:6; Rom. 14:5.

⁸¹ Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:42; 10:9.

⁸² Acts 10:14.

⁸³ Acts 5:13.

⁸⁴ See 1 Cor. 7:21.

⁸⁵ Acts 22:25-28; 25:11 f.

the year 36 the office of high priest really belonged to Caiphas, who left its exercise to his brother-in-law Annas and his relatives Alexander and John.⁸⁶ These ambitious and heartless schemers were ill-pleased to see the continued growth of a community invoking the name of one whom they had crucified. The very fact that the disciples of Jesus had won the favor of the populace, made the Christians even more suspect in the eyes of the authorities. While it is true that many, at sight of the Christian practice of charity, said: "See how they love one another," others (as the Acts of the Apostles insinuates) were seized with a sort of terror at seeing the miracles which they performed.⁸⁷ The disciples of Christ did indeed frequent the synagogues and go up to the Temple; but they also held meetings of their own in private houses, and there created centers of religious activity independent of the sacerdotal authority. Thus especially reasoned the Sadducees, who cherished the most persistent hatred for Christ and who were exasperated by the preaching of the resurrection of the flesh. A number of Herodians and Pharisees were won over by the same bitterness and apprehension. The arrest of the Apostles, the stoning of St. Stephen, the beheading of St. James, and the imprisonment of St. Peter were the sequels of this sinister coalition.

The Acts thus relates the arrest of the Apostles:

"The high priest rising up, and all they that were with him (which is the heresy of the Sadducees) were filled with envy. And they laid hands on the Apostles and put them in the common prison. But an angel of the Lord by night opening the doors of the prison, and leading them out, said: 'Go, and standing speak in the Temple to the people all the words of this life.' Who having heard this, early in the morning entered into the Temple, and taught. And the high priest coming, and they that were with him, called together the

⁸⁶ Acts 4:6.

⁸⁷ Acts 2:43.

council and all the ancients of the children of Israel; and they sent to the prison to have them brought. . . . But one came and told them: 'Behold, the men whom you put in prison are in the Temple, standing and teaching the people.' Then went the officer with the ministers, and brought them without violence; for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. . . . And the high priest asked them, saying: 'Commanding, we commanded you, that you should not teach in this name; and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine. And you have a mind to bring the blood of this man upon us.' But Peter and the Apostles answering, said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.' . . . When they had heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they thought to put them to death. But one in the council rising up, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, respected by all the people, commanded the men to be put forth a little while. And he said to them: 'Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do as touching these men. . . . For if this council or this work be of men, it will come to naught; but if it be of God, you cannot overthrow it, lest perhaps you be found even to fight against God.' And they consented to him. And calling in the Apostles, after they had scourged them, they charged them that they should not speak at all in the name of Jesus; and they dismissed them. And they indeed went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus. And every day they ceased not in the Temple and from house to house, to teach and preach Christ Jesus." ⁸⁸

St. Stephen the Deacon

These events took place toward the end of the year 32. "The Sanhedrin evidently assumed the right to condemn the accused to be flogged; it seems that they wished to bring a capital charge against the Apostles. Subsequently St. Stephen was put to death without any protest from the Roman authorities, and Saul was sent on a mission with letters patent from the Sanhe-

⁸⁸ Acts 5: 17-42.

drin. All these facts show that Tiberius, already ill and completely addicted to the shameful passions of a lustful old man and hateful tyrant, had permitted the prevalence at a distance of a more liberal policy with regard to the provinces subject to the Empire. Pilate was still at Jerusalem; but he was pre-occupied with the agitation that was beginning to brew in Samaria, a disturbance that he soon after stifled in blood by horrible massacres.”⁸⁹

Profiting by this political tranquillity, the religious activity of the Christian community took on a new enthusiasm. The twelve Apostles, overburdened by the works of charity which the growing number of the faithful rendered more and more absorbing, “calling together the multitude of the disciples,” asked them to designate assistants “full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom,” who would be able to act in their place. The entire assembly accepted this proposal. Seven helpers were chosen, at their head Stephen, “a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.”⁹⁰ This was the institution of a new order of ministers, the diaconate.

If the passage where the Acts of the Apostles speaks of the institution of the diaconate is compared with other passages of the holy books where it is mentioned, notably the Epistles of St. Paul, it would seem that there is question, not of a transitory ministry established by a purely human will, but of a higher institution possessing a definitive character and prompted by the Holy Ghost. The great importance which the Apostles attached to the choice of the first seven deacons, their evident concern to indicate the conditions to be fulfilled by those chosen, the solemnity with which they surrounded the new institution, the enumeration of the rare qualities which St. Paul required of deacons, and the close association between them and the bishops, is to be explained only by this lofty idea of the

⁸⁹ Le Camus, *op. cit.*, I, 97.

⁹⁰ Acts 6: 1-6.

diaconate. Even from a purely historical point of view everything leads us to believe that the Apostles, by imposing hands on the newly chosen, were conferring on them a sacramental grace that would aid them to fulfil their important duties worthily.⁹¹

Scripture mentions three of these duties: the "serving of tables,"⁹² that is, the daily distribution to the poor, especially the widows, of food supplied by the resources of the rich, the administration of Baptism,⁹³ and preaching.⁹⁴

In this last duty no one acquitted himself more brilliantly and zealously than the deacon Stephen. His ministry was exercised particularly among the Hellenist Jews, to whom the Apostles probably had less ready access. The power of his word⁹⁵ and the gift of miracles which accompanied it,⁹⁶ brought him great success with the populace, who gathered about him. His enemies began to dispute with him, but "they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit that spoke" through him.⁹⁷

"Then they suborned men to say they had heard him speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God. And they stirred up the people and the ancients and the scribes; and running together, they took him and brought him to the council. And they set up false witnesses, who said: 'This man ceaseth not to speak words against the holy place and the law. For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the traditions which Moses delivered unto us.' And all that sat in the

⁹¹ The Council of Trent (Sess. 23, canon 6) declares that the diaconate is of divine institution: "*Si quis dixerit in Ecclesia catholica non esse hierarchiam divina ordinatione institutam, quae constat in episcopis, presbyteris, et ministris, anathema sit.*"

⁹² Acts 6:2.

⁹³ Acts 8:38.

⁹⁴ Acts 7:2-53.

⁹⁵ Acts 6:10.

⁹⁶ Acts 6:8.

⁹⁷ Acts 6:10.

council, looking on him, saw his face as if it had been the face of an angel. Then the high priest said: 'Are these things so?' . . . Stephen said: 'You stiffnecked and uncircumcized in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do you also. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them who foretold of the coming of the Just One; of whom you have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.'

"Now hearing these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed with their teeth at him. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looking up steadfastly to heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And he said: 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.' And they crying out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and with one accord ran violently upon him. And casting him forth without the city, they stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, invoking, and saying: 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' And falling on his knees, he cried with a loud voice, saying: 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep in the Lord." ⁹⁸

Thus died the first Christian martyr. Like his Master, with his last breath he delivered his soul into the hands of the heavenly Father and prayed for his executioners.

Simon Magus

The persecutors triumphed. Being now rid of him whom they considered their most formidable opponent, they hoped easily to get the upper hand over the others by terrifying them. The procurator had let the murder of Stephen take place; and when it was over, he raised no protest. They felt, therefore, that they might go ahead. After Stephen's death, "there was

⁹⁸ Acts 6: 11—7: 59. Cf. Lagrange, *Saint Etienne et son sanctuaire à Jérusalem*.

raised a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all dispersed through the countries of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles.”⁹⁹

But these wretched designs were thwarted. An event took place which, with the regularity of a law, would be repeated in the course of the centuries: the violent dispersion of the Christians occasioned a more rapid diffusion of Christianity. Philip the deacon's evangelization of Samaria, and the conversion of Saul, the future Apostle of the Gentiles, were the first fruits of Stephen's martyrdom.

The province of Samaria, located in the middle of Palestine between Galilee and Judea, was inhabited by a mixed population, made up of the remnants of the ancient kingdom of Israel (destroyed by Salmanasar in 721) and Assyrian colonists who were brought in by the conqueror.¹⁰⁰ These alien colonists in their new abode preserved the form of worship of their former country. Some time afterwards, the Samaritans, alarmed by a plague which they considered to be a vengeance of the god of the country whom the new inhabitants had disregarded, had recourse to one of the former Israelite priests transported to Assyria, to teach them the worship of Yahweh. This priest made his residence at Bethel. But each of the ethnic groups, while adopting the worship of Yahweh, continued to worship the gods of its home land; thus Samaria had a multitude of cults, and each town had its own religion.¹⁰¹ The religion of the country was, therefore, a corrupted Judaism mingled with paganism. When the Jews returned from captivity, their refusal to accept the help of the Samaritans in the rebuilding of the Temple accentuated the unfriendly feeling between Samaria and the other two provinces. It is probably to this period that

⁹⁹ Acts 8: 1.

¹⁰⁰ See 4 Kings 17: 5; 18: 9; 1 Esdras 4: 10.

¹⁰¹ See 4 Kings 17: 21-41. Cf. Vigouroux, *La Bible et les découvertes modernes*, III, 575-586.

we must refer the worship on Garizim, the rival of Jerusalem. From the Gospel we knew that, in the time of Christ, a sharp hostility existed between the Jews and the Samaritans.¹⁰² Yet Jesus spoke of them in terms of gentle mercy,¹⁰³ and before His Ascension into Heaven, He expressed His desire that the evangelization of Samaria should be undertaken after that of Jerusalem and Judea, but before that of the countries of the Gentiles.¹⁰⁴

About the year 33, at the period of St. Stephen's martyrdom, the people of Samaria were greatly stirred by the proselytism of a man who, exploiting the religious unrest of a people ever prompt to welcome new envoys of the divinity, proclaimed himself to be a superhuman being.¹⁰⁵ His name was Simon. He was born in the village of Gitta, near Sichem,¹⁰⁶ and was reputed to be an extraordinary magician. If we accept the testimony of the *Clementine Homilies*,¹⁰⁷ Simon was brought up in Egypt, where he became familiar with those vague and pretentious theories toward which Alexandrian Judaism was tending and which were later formulated in the different Gnostic sects.

By the strangeness of his imaginings, the prestige of his sorcery, and the boldness of his declarations, this man exercised a kind of fascination over the masses. And the people said: "This man is the power of God, which is called great."¹⁰⁸ St. Jerome relates that Simon used to say to his listeners: "I am the word of God, I am Beauty, I am Consolation, I am the All-powerful, I am the All of God."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰² John 4: 9; 8: 48.

¹⁰³ John, chap. 4; Luke, chap. 10.

¹⁰⁴ Acts 1: 8.

¹⁰⁵ Acts 8: 9.

¹⁰⁶ St. Justin, *Apol.*, I, 26.

¹⁰⁷ *Homilies*, II, 22.

¹⁰⁸ Acts 8: 10.

¹⁰⁹ St. Jerome, *In Matth.*, 24: 5.

When Philip, the second of the seven deacons, left Jerusalem, he went to Sebaste¹¹⁰ to preach the gospel. In that district, refractory to the Jerusalem authorities, he was assured of escaping the persecution of the Jewish priests. The deacons, in consequence of their dispersion, were freed from the material cares of the community, which until then had constituted their chief duties, and now devoted themselves to the ministry of preaching. Our missionary soon found himself confronted by Simon the Magician.

We know very little about Philip. It would seem that he was born at Caesarea.¹¹¹ His four daughters assisted him in his ministry by instructing the neophytes. They also seem to have had an important part in the charitable works of that early period. Philip had received the gift of miracles in an unusual way. His name seems to indicate a Hellenist origin, which would have facilitated his relations with peoples who were alien to Judea. Philip cured so great a number of possessed persons, paralytics, cripples, and infirm of all sorts, that many Samaritans asked for Christian Baptism. Simon himself asked for and received this initiation into the faith of Christ.

The deacons were authorized to baptize, but not to give the Holy Ghost. This latter power was reserved to the Apostles. They soon learned of the success which God bestowed on Philip's preaching and thought the time had come for conferring on the new Christians the complement of the sacramental graces received by those who were initiated into the faith of Christ. Peter and John went into the midst of the young Christian group of Sebaste and imposed hands upon each member of the new community, conferring the Holy Ghost on them.

¹¹⁰ This was the ancient Samaria, capital of the province of that name. The name Sebaste, or Augusta, was given to it in memory of Augustus, who had bestowed it on Herod.

¹¹¹ From the Acts of the Apostles (21:8f.) we know that later he dwelt at Caesarea with his four daughters.

There is reason to suppose that the outpouring of spiritual graces which was ordinarily produced at Jerusalem upon the newly confirmed was repeated in Samaria with particular splendor. A holy enthusiasm seized upon those who had just received the grace of the Spirit. Words were powerless to express the holy joy that filled their hearts, the ecstasy that raised their souls toward mystical contemplation. The expression on their faces, the incomplete phrases that died on their lips, and their unfinished gestures, left no doubt as to the efficacy of the sacramental rite.¹¹² Those who were present could not resist the impression of a presence and a particular action of God in their midst.

Simon was a witness to these moving scenes. The wretch, whose conversion may not have been free from ulterior motives, then experienced in his heart the worst temptation of his life. He yielded to it, boldly came to St. Peter, offered him money, and said: "Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I shall lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." The first of the popes now found himself face to face with the first heresiarch. The Acts of the Apostles records his admirable reply: "Keep thy money to perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."¹¹³ The magician bowed and pretended to be sorry. Soon, however, we see him, going about the world unrepentant and rebellious, followed by a wretched woman, Helena, whom he called "the Eternal Thought," whom he pretended to "deliver," and whom he made a partner in his works of sorcery. Later on an entire theologico-philosophical system was attributed to him. Probably this is merely a synthesis, made by his

¹¹² Referring to these facts, a Protestant author writes: "Therein we see the sacramental and magical idea that has ever since predominated in the Catholic Church." (Monnier, *Notion de l'apostolat*, p. 170.) In those events we see rather the notion of sacramental efficacy, *ex opere operato*, which thus is traceable to the earliest beginnings of Christianity.

¹¹³ Acts 8:20.

disciples, of the ideas he spread, and perhaps intended simply to cover the immorality of his conduct.

According to this system, Simon held that the principle of all things is a spiritual, eternal, and invisible fire. From this first principle emanated lower spirits, in a gradation more and more material—the eons. It was their function to create and preserve the world. These spirits keep in captivity the eternal Thought of God, whose work they are. Who will deliver this divine *Ennoia*? Simon will, the Standing One, the Word, the great Power of God; and his whole mission will be to labor for this deliverance.¹¹⁴ If these be really Simon's ideas, all the fancies of Gnosticism had their germs in the head of this innovator.

This wicked man who, almost immediately after the Savior's death, thus withstood the Church, was crafty and violent, intelligent and depraved, attacking both discipline and faith. He left a deep and sad memory in the first generations of Christians, who attributed to him a mass of crimes and adventures, wonderful and sinister.¹¹⁵ His name survives in the language of the Church; she gives the name "simony" to the crime of trafficking in spiritual things.

The Eunuch of Queen Candace

The evangelization of Samaria was a great step in the spread of Christianity. The Church had passed the confines of the Jewish world and was soon to receive a pagan into its

¹¹⁴ This system is developed in *The Great Announcement*, curious fragments of which are preserved in the *Philosophumena*, IV, vii; VI, vi ff.; X, viii.

¹¹⁵ Fanciful details about Simon Magus are to be found in the pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* and in the *Clementine Homilies*. More trustworthy information is contained in Hegesippus, quoted by Eusebius, IV, xxii; in St. Justin, *First Apology*, 31 and 56; *Dialogue with Trypho*, 70; St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haereses*, I, 22 f.; Tertullian, *De anima*, 34; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, II; VII, 17; and the *Philosophumena*, VI, 7-20.

ranks. The honor of this conversion belongs also to the deacon Philip.

The man who was the subject of this new conquest belonged to that category of foreigners who, though not being circumcised nor binding themselves to the prescriptions of the Mosaic Law, felt the profound influence of Jewish monotheism. They were usually called proselytes or "men fearing God." They were free from the superstitions of idolatry and from belief in the abstract divinity of the philosophers, and were accustomed to adore the true, personal, living God in the Temple at Jerusalem. This man was an officer of the queen of Ethiopia. He was returning home from a pilgrimage to the Holy City, driving in his chariot along the road which skirts the Mediterranean coast. Philip, impelled by the Spirit of God, approached him and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He said to the eunuch: "Thinkest thou that thou understandest what thou readest?" To this the eunuch answered: "How can I unless some man show me?" Philip then sat beside him in the chariot and, interpreting the text of Isaiah, announced Jesus Christ to him. As they went on their way, they came to a body of water. "The eunuch said: 'See, here is water; what doth hinder me from being baptized?' And Philip said: 'If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest.' And he answering, said: 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' " Philip then went down into the water with him and baptized him.¹¹⁶

In this scene, so vividly reported in the Acts of the Apostles, we perceive the method followed for the initiation of men of good will into the Church. An inner grace and good example impelled them to pray and to read the Scripture; but there must be a minister of God to interpret the divine words for them, to instruct them, and, after being assured of their sufficient instruction and of their faith, to baptize them.

¹¹⁶ Acts 8: 26-40.

Did the newly baptized eunuch bring about any conversions in Ethiopia? We have no evidence on this subject. We only know that Philip preached Jesus, while going from Azotus to Caesarea, in the almost pagan cities of the ancient country of the Philistines. But he seems to have turned only to men of the Jewish race or to strangers who, like the officer of Candace, adored the God of Israel: these latter were known as "proselytes of the gate."

Such was the first result of the persecution in which the first Christian martyr was slain. The second result was the conversion of one of Stephen's persecutors.

Saul of Tarsus

Those who stoned Stephen laid down their garments at the feet of a young man whose name was Saul, and who "was consenting to his death."¹¹⁷ While Philip was evangelizing Samaria, "Saul as yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues; that if he found any men and women of this way, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem."¹¹⁸

He whom the Scripture here calls a young man may have been thirty years old.¹¹⁹ The world has, perhaps, never known a more ardent soul. His incredible zeal had led him to defend, with unwearied animosity and perseverance, the purest Pharisæic traditions. He was born in a Hellenist center, Tarsus of Cilicia, of a father who was a Roman citizen. Yet he had been but slightly influenced by Greece and Rome. He was a Hebrew,

¹¹⁷ Acts 7: 59.

¹¹⁸ Acts 9: 1 f.

¹¹⁹ According to the ancients, one was spoken of as a "young man" until he reached thirty years of age. Old age began at 60. Between 30 and 60 was the ripe age. Cicero speaks of Antonius as a young man (*adulescens*) when the latter was thirty years old. (*Second Philippic*, 21.)

the son of Hebrews; "a Pharisee, the son of Pharisees."¹²⁰ He himself said: "According to the most sure sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee."¹²¹ Whole-hearted as he was, he could not do things by halves. He accepted the whole system of minute prescriptions and complicated traditions which made the Pharisee's life a veritable slavery. Anyone who he thought was trying to harm that network or attenuate those traditions, he looked upon as a foe to be fought. It was probably in the synagogue of the Cilicians that he first heard the teachings of Christ and defended the cause of the Temple and the Law with that subtle argumentation which he owed to his teacher Gamaliel, in that vivacious, abrupt, impelling, incorrect, but remarkably forceful style which he seems to have acquired from life rather than from books or study, from his own soul rather than from the influence of a school or from the atmosphere of any country.¹²²

Stephen's trial and execution, which Saul witnessed, unleashed his fury. In consequence of circumstances which we cannot precisely detail, but which the most elementary logic compels us to admit, Saul had not seen any of the wonderful things that occurred on Calvary, at the Resurrection, and on Pentecost. To his biased mind, the accounts which he heard of those events no doubt struck him as absurd fables and hateful inventions. In his eyes, Stephen was an impostor or a fool. At any rate, the Christians were foes of the Pharisaic tradition and therefore must be exterminated at all cost. In his own later description of his religious fury, he compares himself to a wild beast on a rampage.¹²³ He is no longer satisfied merely to look on at the execution of a victim, but enters private houses and

¹²⁰ Acts 23: 6.

¹²¹ Acts 26: 5.

¹²² "The smiling and majestic panorama of Tarsus seems to have left no trace in Paul's imagination. . . . Inanimate nature he views only in its relations to man. His realm is psychology." (Prat, *La Théologie de saint Paul*, I, 19 f.)

¹²³ Acts 8: 3.

drags out the people living there, men and women, to cast them into prison. But soon, for want of victims, the persecution at Jerusalem died out. Therefore, Saul requested the high priest Caiphas ¹²⁴ to commission him officially to seek out the Christians of Damascus and put them in chains. There God's grace was waiting for the ferocious persecutor.

"As he went on his journey, it came to pass that he drew nigh to Damascus. And suddenly a light from heaven shined round about him. And falling on the ground, he heard a voice saying to him: 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?' Who said: 'Who art Thou, Lord?' And He: 'I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the goad.' And he trembling and astonished, said: 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' And the Lord said to Him: 'Arise, and go into the city, and there it shall be told thee what thou must do.' " Saul rose up, blind. He was led to Damascus, where the head

¹²⁴ Caiphas was not deposed until the year 36 by Vitellius, the governor of Syria. St. Paul's conversion must have taken place in 33. This date can be inferred from his Epistle to the Galatians, wherein we are told that he made his second journey to Jerusalem fourteen years after his conversion; but this journey must coincide with the famine that occurred about 47. In general, the chronology of the Apostolic age—from Christ's Passion to the fall of Jerusalem—has been a subject of countless studies. A summary of those investigations may be found in an article by Prat, "*La Chronologie de l'age apostolique*," published in the *Recherches de science religieuse*, 1912, p. 372. Brassac, on the basis of a recent discovery, published an article entitled, "Une inscription de Delphes et la chronologie de saint Paul," in the *Revue biblique* for January and April, 1923. According to Levesque, the following are the principal landmarks of this chronology:

Martyrdom of St. Stephen. Conversion of St. Paul	33
St. Paul's first visit to Jerusalem	36
Second visit to Jerusalem	46-47
Dispute at Antioch	50
Second Mission	51-54
Arrival at Corinth	51 or 52
Meeting with the proconsul Gallio	52 or 53
Third missionary journey	54-58
Epistle to the Romans	57-58
Beginning of imprisonment at Caesarea	58
Arrival of Festus	60
End of first imprisonment at Rome	63

of the Christian community, Ananias, cured him, baptized him, and presented him to the assembled brethren.

Such was the historically undeniable event ¹²⁵ which not only gave St. Paul to the Church, but exercised a considerable influence on the great Apostle's theology, and thereby on all Catholic theology.¹²⁶ Jesus, the crucified of Jerusalem, manifests Himself to Saul as a Being ever living, and blames Saul for persecuting His Church—"Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" These two ideas—Christ ever living, and Christ identifying Himself with His Church—remained as two master thoughts in the Apostle's teaching and, through him, were transmitted into the teaching of the entire Church.¹²⁷

Herod Agrippa, King of Judea

While these events were taking place at Damascus, the authorities at Jerusalem continued to plan new measures against the disciples of Christ. Up till then the chief priests had always stopped short of capital punishment.¹²⁸ We may well suppose that fear of the people had much to do with this restraint. It also seems that the procurator, Pontius Pilate, after his lamentable surrender in the matter of Christ's death sen-

¹²⁵ "To draw from these discrepancies [Acts 9: 1-22; 22: 1-21; 26: 9-20] an argument against the historical character of the narrative seems to us a forced and arbitrary proceeding. If they were perfectly reconcilable, or even if they had never existed, those who will not admit the miracle would just as decisively reject the testimony of the Acts of the Apostles. . . . Their denial of the miraculous rests on a philosophical theory, the discussion of which lies outside the scope of historical research." These are the words of the Protestant scholar, Auguste Sabatier, *The Apostle Paul*, p. 59.

¹²⁶ "It is a well-known fact that Augustine's theology, and through Augustine that of St. Thomas, and through St. Thomas all Scholasticism, are derived by direct descent from the doctrine of St. Paul." (Prat, *La Théologie de saint Paul*, I, 17.)

¹²⁷ Prat, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-62.

¹²⁸ The slaying of Stephen has been regarded as the result of a spontaneous outbreak. It was not officially approved, nor was it carried out by the Jewish and Roman authorities.

tence, showed himself less inclined to make new concessions to the religious authorities of Jerusalem. But the events of the years 36 and 37 allowed the enemies of the Christian name to push their boldness farther.

Upon the evidence of an impostor, who claimed that he knew and could point out the place where Moses had buried certain precious vessels, a large number of Samaritans met together on Mount Garizim. Pilate looked upon this noisy gathering as the beginning of a revolt and had the unfortunate crowd pitilessly massacred. In this instance it would seem that the Roman governor, yielding to the promptings of his restless and somber temperament, had exceeded the bounds of a just repression. Because of his disinclination to help the chief priests in their strifes, the latter took advantage of the occasion to denounce him to the legate of Syria, Lucius Vitellius. This man, whose son, of the same name, later occupied the imperial throne, appears in history as the type of a common upstart. Just then he was trying by every means to win the favor of the people whom he governed. Josephus relates that one of his first measures was to return to the Jews the priestly vestments which had been kept in the Antonia tower ever since Herod the Great.¹²⁹ Vitellius cordially received the protests of the Jewish authorities and sent Pilate to Rome. He was banished to Vienne in Gaul. If we are to accept Eusebius' statement, Pilate, whose life had been a strangely tormented existence ever since the condemnation of Christ, committed suicide there.¹³⁰ Meanwhile the death of Tiberius (March 16, A. D. 37) and the succession of Caligula did but encourage the criminal projects of the Jews. The policy of the new emperor, before madness deranged his mind, was to give the peoples of the East their autonomy and native rulers.¹³¹ A friend and com-

¹²⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, XV, xi, 4; XVIII, iv, 2.

¹³⁰ Eusebius, II, vii.

¹³¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, XVIII, v, 3; Suetonius, *Caligula*, 16.

panion of his debauches was Agrippa, the brother of Herodias. In Pilate's place, Vitellius put his friend Marcellus, who was agreed to his policy.

The situation became especially threatening for the Christians when imperial favor restored the royalty at Jerusalem in the person of Herod Agrippa I. This grandson of Herod the Great, thanks to Caligula's protection, at first bent his efforts to the territorial reconstruction of his ancestor's realm. His fawning attitude toward Emperor Claudius made his fortune. With regard to his Jewish subjects, his policy was equally shameful. To gain the regard of the priests, this debauched wretch hypocritically pretended to observe every smallest prescription of the Mosaic Law. To win popular favor, he exempted the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the tax due the king from each family.¹³² From such a monarch as King Herod Agrippa the Christians could expect nothing but new persecution.

This time the persecution fell upon the head of an Apostle. Did Agrippa imagine that James, the son of Zebedee, was at the head of the Christian community? It is not unlikely that this "son of thunder" was one of the most forceful preachers of the new faith. The king of Judea had him put to death; but we have no evidence touching the circumstances. We know only that he was not stoned, as the Jewish law provided, but was beheaded according to Roman custom.¹³³ One day his mother had asked a high place of honor for him in the Messianic kingdom. His martyrdom was the Master's reply: James the son of Zebedee was the first of the Apostles to shed his blood for Christ.¹³⁴

¹³² Josephus, XXX, vi, 3.

¹³³ Abdias (*Historia certaminis apostolici*) says: "*Cervicem spiculatori porrexii.*"

¹³⁴ On St. James, son of Zebedee, usually called James the Greater, see Ermoni, "*Les Eglises de Palestine aux deux premiers siècles,*" in the *Revue d'histoire ecclés.*, January 18, 1901.

Amidst the Paschal festivities of the year 42,¹³⁵ the Jerusalemites and pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem from other places to celebrate the great Jewish solemnity, suddenly learned that Peter, the chief of the Twelve, had been placed under arrest. Agrippa had carefully calculated the circumstances of this clever stroke, through which he displayed his zeal for the religion of his subjects, while at the same time he gratified his personal hatred.

The formal trial and execution were postponed to a few days later. The astute monarch was doubtless preparing some new theatrical effect, calculated to impress the populace. Meanwhile, as we learn from St. Luke, "prayer was made without ceasing by the Church unto God for Peter."¹³⁶ Closely guarded by four squads of soldiers, who were successively relieved at each of the four watches of the night, Peter was chained to his keepers. As he waited for the hour of his deliverance or martyrdom, a bright light suddenly filled the prison, Peter heard a voice saying, "Arise quickly"; the chains fell from his hands, and an angel stood before him in human form. Peter wondered whether he was the victim of a hallucination. But the angel, directing Peter to follow, led him to the iron gate of the prison, which opened of itself. The Apostle was free. He at once turned his steps to a friend's house, where the faithful ordinarily met for common prayer: it was the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark. There Peter told the astonished family the miracle of his deliverance. Then he said: "Tell these things to James and to the brethren."¹³⁷

The James here mentioned was the bishop of Jerusalem. According to accounts that appear to be very early, the son of Cleophas and Mary was placed at the head of the Church in

¹³⁵ The reasons for adopting this date are set forth in Fouard, *St. Peter and the First Years of Christianity*, pp. 406 ff.

¹³⁶ Acts 12: 5.

¹³⁷ Acts 12: 1-19.

Jerusalem in 42, when the Apostles dispersed to preach the Gospel.¹³⁸ He was the first bishop of the holy city.¹³⁹ His piety, his faithfulness to the ancient prescriptions of the Law, his long prayers in the Temple, and his spirit of justice, made him venerable to the Jews as well as to the Christians. He was popularly known as "the Just" and "the rampart of the people."¹⁴⁰ One day Paul joyfully related to him what God had done for the Gentiles. With undisguised national pride, James replied: "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews that have believed; and they are all zealots for the Law."¹⁴¹ But James was a witness of the risen Christ and this was enough to make him insupportable to the sect of the Sadducees. A fierce Sadducee, Annas the younger, a son of the high priest Annas, who had been more instrumental than anyone else in Christ's death, later on, in the reign of Agrippa II (A. D. 62), gratified the ancestral hatred by putting to death the holy Bishop of Jerusalem.

Ananias and Saphira

"They shall deliver you up to councils," the Savior had said, "and in the synagogues you shall be beaten. . . . Be not thoughtful beforehand what you shall speak."¹⁴² But He had also foretold that the enemy would sow cockle in the field of the householder, and that false prophets would rise up among the people.¹⁴³ The Church would not escape persecution, nor would she be spared schisms and heresies. The early Christian

¹³⁸ Eusebius (V, xviii, 14) states that the Apostles stayed in Jerusalem for twelve years after the Ascension. Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata*, vi) testifies to the same tradition. In the corrected chronology, the Ascension is generally placed in the year 30.

¹³⁹ Eusebius, II, i and xxiii; III, v; IV, v; VII, xix. Cf. St. Jerome, *De viris illustribus*, chap. 2 (*P. L.*, XXIII, 639).

¹⁴⁰ Eusebius, II, xxiii.

¹⁴¹ Acts 21: 20.

¹⁴² Mark 13: 9-11.

¹⁴³ Matt. 13: 25; Mark 13: 22.

community of Jerusalem was well acquainted with both.

From the beginning two currents were discernible among the disciples of Christ: that of the Jews of Palestine and that of the Hellenist Jews. The latter name was applied to those Jews who, during the period of the dispersion, had adopted the Greek language and to some extent also the customs of the Greeks. The diaconate was instituted in consequence of the demands of the Hellenists, who complained that their widows were neglected "in the daily ministrations."¹⁴⁴ The opposition between the two parties remained a permanent source of strife in the community.

More serious difficulties arose from the fact of its economic organization. We have already observed that, through a natural prompting of charity, most of the first Christians sold as much of their possessions as they could and gave the price into the community treasury. During the Savior's own life the Apostles had had a community purse: an attempt was made to continue this early tradition in a larger circle. Christianity spread especially among the poor. For the rich to place their possessions into a common fund was the most delicate means they had to come to the relief of their poor brethren.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Acts 6: 1.

¹⁴⁵ "There is a surprising likeness," says Renan, "between such attempted organizations of the proletariat and certain Utopias that have been undertaken in times not very remote." (Renan, *Les Apôtres*, p. 112.) But it is evident that profound differences separate this common life of the first Christians and the organization contemplated by Communism. True it is that in both cases the distribution is made according to each one's needs, not in proportion to his contribution; but among the Christians, the offering is spontaneous, without any sort of constraint: any doubt as to this is removed by St. Peter's words to Ananias. Moreover, no mention is made of the proceeds of labor. Did they remain the property of the worker or did they too become part of the community fund? The text gives no indication. Furthermore, between the Communist soul, altogether concerned with the division of earthly things, and the Christian soul, with its thought in Heaven, any supposed likeness is artificial. To call this primitive organization a Utopia and to say that the Church was eager to abandon it as soon as it was seen to be chimerical, is no less erroneous. In fact the Church never has abandoned that ideal. Renan himself acknowledges this to be so. He says: "When whole countries became Christian, the rule of the primitive Church took refuge in the mon-

"A certain man named Ananias, with Saphira his wife, sold a piece of land, and by fraud kept back part of the price of the land, his wife being privy thereunto; and bringing a certain part of it, laid it at the feet of the Apostles. But Peter said: 'Ananias, why hath Satan tempted thy heart, that thou shouldst lie to the Holy Ghost, and by fraud keep part of the price of the land? Whilst it remained, did it not remain to thee? And after it was sold, was it not in thy power? . . . Thou hast not lied to men, but to God.' And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and gave up the ghost. . . . And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what had happened, came in. . . . And Peter said to her: 'Why have you agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold the feet of them who have buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out.' Immediately she fell down before his feet and gave up the ghost. . . . And there came great fear upon the whole church and upon all that heard these things." ¹⁴⁶

By this terrible example God showed the members of the young Church that one does not deceive His ministers with impunity, and that nothing is more unworthy of a Christian believer than to evade a duty or even a counsel by an act of disloyalty.

A like event was never witnessed again. The economic régime of the early Church soon disappeared, made impossible by the very fact of its growth. But a source of more lasting conflict presently arose in connection with the question of admitting pagans into the Church.

Baptism of Cornelius the Centurion

The Savior, speaking to His disciples of the signs that would portend the fall of Jerusalem, had said: "Unto all nations. In a certain sense, the monastic life is but the continuation of that primitive Church. The convent is the result of the Christian spirit. There is no perfect Christianity without the convent, because nowhere else can the Gospel ideal be realized." (*Op. cit.*, p. 128.)

¹⁴⁶ Acts 5: 1-11.

tions the gospel must first be preached.”¹⁴⁷ The Apostles took advantage of every opportunity to carry out the Master’s injunction.

Peter lived habitually in Jerusalem. But his duties as head of the Church obliged him to visit the Christian groups founded in various places.¹⁴⁸ The districts evangelized by the deacon Philip were the first to which he went, to consolidate and extend the work so happily begun. God blessed his apostolate by numerous miracles. At Lydda, in the southern part of the rich plain of Sharon, “he found a certain man named Eneas, who had kept his bed for eight years, who was ill of the palsy. And Peter said to him: ‘Eneas, the Lord Jesus Christ healeth thee: arise, and make thy bed.’ And immediately he arose. And all that dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him; who were converted to the Lord.”¹⁴⁹ At Joppa,¹⁵⁰ an important seaport which appears to have been a center of Christianity, he raised to life a widow, Tabitha, a woman “full of good works,” who seems to have devoted her fortune to the needs of the early Church.¹⁵¹

In these cities, with their mixed population, the problem of admitting pagans into the Church presented difficulties which the Apostle did not hide from himself. The question was not to decide whether the infidels should enter the kingdom of God; the Master had solved this question in their favor. It concerned the conditions on which they were to be admitted. Must they first become Jews in order to become Christians? Would they have to pass through Judaism to come to the Gospel? This was the point at issue. The Jerusalem Jews (Hebrews, they were called) were clearly inclined to answer the question in the affirmative. But the Hellenist Jews (the Greeks) inclined to

¹⁴⁷ Mark 13: 10.

¹⁴⁸ Acts 9: 32.

¹⁴⁹ Acts 9: 32-35.

¹⁵⁰ Now Jaffa.

¹⁵¹ Acts 9: 36-42.

the negative. Little by little the views were formulated with sharper cleavage between them. It is not surprising that the conflict was long and even bitter. Christianity and Judaism seemed to be striving for their existence. If, said the Hebrews, "the Gentiles enter the Church directly, and there obtain through faith alone the same rank and privileges as the Jews, what becomes of the rights of Israel? What advantage has the elect people over other nations? Is not this to deny the absolute validity of Judaism? On the other hand, if circumcision be imposed on the Gentile converts, is not that in itself a declaration that faith in Christ is insufficient for salvation? Does it not reduce the gospel to the position of a mere accessory to Mosaism? Is not this to deny the absolute validity of the work of Jesus Christ?" ¹⁵²

Peter was deeply concerned over this problem, when a heavenly vision brought him the light. One day, as he was at prayer on the roof of a tanner's house, which he had chosen for his residence, in view of that sea by which the gospel was to spread in the pagan world, he had a prophetic ecstasy. He saw the heavens open and a sort of linen sheet let down. It was knotted at the four corners and was suspended from the firmament. When he looked into it, he saw therein all kinds of four-footed beasts, reptiles, and birds. And he heard a voice saying to him: "Arise, Peter; kill and eat." But he answered: "Far be it from me. For I never did eat anything that is common and unclean." We know that, according to the Mosaic Law, certain animals were called unclean, and no one could eat them without himself becoming defiled. This mixing of clean and unclean animals in the great sheet made the whole collection unclean. The voice replied: "That which God hath cleansed, do not thou call common." This was done three times. Then the sheet was taken up into heaven.

Peter wondered what might be the meaning of this vision,

¹⁵² Sabatier, *The Apostle Paul*, p. 125.

when three men came and told him that a certain Roman centurion named Cornelius, a just and God-fearing man, to whom the whole Jewish nation gave good testimony, had been directed by an angel to find Peter and hear his words. Peter's eyes were opened. He saw God's purpose: the legal observances abolished or at least given their death blow by the sacrifice of Christ; the Old Law gradually giving way to the New; and, as a direct consequence, the Gentiles entering the Church through Baptism alone, without the need of first being circumcised.

Peter went to the centurion's house and instructed him in the chief truths of the faith. He was preparing to confer Baptism on Cornelius and all the members of his household, when the Holy Ghost, this time before Baptism had been given, descended upon the catechumens. The mystical graces of prophecy and of the gift of tongues were bestowed upon these still pagan souls. God Himself came to purify them in a manifest way. No longer was any hesitation possible. Then Peter said: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost, as well as we?" And he poured the water of Baptism upon the head of the pagan Cornelius, and likewise baptized his entire household.¹⁵³

Word of this event soon reached Judea and there caused a great stir. When Peter returned to Jerusalem, "they that were of the circumcision," as the Scripture calls them, found fault with him. They said to him: "Why didst thou go in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them?" The Apostle boldly faced the storm. He related the details of what had occurred: the vision on the roof, the appearance of the angel to the Roman centurion, the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the household of the unbaptized man. Their murmuring was silenced by this simple and firm narration. Peter concluded by saying: "If

¹⁵³ Acts 10: 1-48.

then God gave them the same grace as to us also who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that could withstand God?"¹⁵⁴ The malcontents held their peace. But "they that were of the circumcision" soon started their complaints again, loudly recriminated, and made the first schism in the infant Church.

On the other hand, those who were urged on towards new countries by zeal for the Gospel, those who were fired by the memory of the Savior's words to announce the Gospel "to every creature," were moved with a new enthusiasm, seeing the great prospects opening before them. On the Phenician coast, at Tyre, Sidon, Berytus, and Byblus, the gospel missionaries, after preaching in the synagogues, met pagans who were troubled by religious unrest, who longed for purification, and were seeking for the truth. The same was true of the island of Cyprus, where the Jews had settled in large numbers in the time of the Machabees.¹⁵⁵ But there was another city where the Jewish world was found even more mingled with the pagan: Antioch, the capital of Syria.

At the time of the dispersion following the martyrdom of Stephen, Apostles and disciples took refuge in Antioch and there preached the glad tidings in the synagogues.¹⁵⁶ Shortly afterwards some Christians from Cyprus and Cyrene, more familiar with Gentile society, came to Antioch and there announced the Gospel to the pagans themselves.¹⁵⁷ Upon learning that Peter had baptized a Roman centurion, they redoubled

¹⁵⁴ Acts 11:17.

¹⁵⁵ See 1 Mach. 15:23.

¹⁵⁶ Acts 11:19.

¹⁵⁷ Acts 11:20 f. The names of these first apostles are unknown. It has been conjectured that the principal ones were Lucius the Cyrenean, Manahen (foster brother of Herod Antipas), and Simon who was called Niger (mentioned in Acts 13:1). From St. Luke (Acts 6:5) we learn that Nicolas, one of the first seven deacons, was from Antioch.

their zeal. It was in this city, the third largest of the world,¹⁵⁸ the "metropolis of the East," that the Church, for the first time, was about to have extensive contact with the Greco-Roman civilization.

¹⁵⁸ Rome and Alexandria were the first two. See Josephus, *Jewish War*, III, ii. 4. Cf. Strabo, *Geography*, XVI, ii, 5.

CHAPTER III

First Contacts of the Primitive Church with the Greco-Roman World (40-62)

The Church at Antioch

THE city of Antioch was the residence of the imperial legate of Syria. About the middle of the first century it may have counted half a million inhabitants. It had been built by Seleucus in a superb location on the banks of the river Orontes. At first it was the capital of the Seleucid kings, who embellished it with that taste for theatrical decoration which they showed in the construction of their large cities. Its magnificence increased under Roman rule. The extensive ruins, which the traveler may still see,¹ lead us to imagine what may have been, for example, the great *Corso*, paved with marble and white stone, lined with sumptuous residences, public monuments, and royal palaces, which traversed the full length of the city. The wealth of its inhabitants, grown rich through commerce, the luxury of its buildings, the soft beauty of the encircling countryside, all favored the growth of a sensual paganism. The worship of Apollo and of the nymphs was displayed in long processions, which used to pass through woods of laurel and myrtle along roads bordered with roses and jasmine, to venerate the colossal statue of Apollo of Daphne which was celebrated throughout the world.² At this spot it was that Julian the Apostate later tried in vain to revive a paganism already fatally stricken.

In a retired section of the city, a group of Jews, drawn

¹ Cf. Müller, *Antiquitates antiochenae*.

² Cf. 2 Mach. 4: 33.

thither long before by the Seleucidae, who hoped thus to foil the Ptolemies, were worshipping the true God. Many historians think Antioch was the scene of the martyrdom of the saintly old man Eleazar, of the seven Machabee brothers, and of their heroic mother.³

In course of time, between these true adorers of Yahweh and the multitude of idolaters, there gradually emerged a mixed and undefined mass: Hellenist Jews, more or less imbued with pagan customs, and "God-fearing" pagans attracted by the grandeur of Jewish monotheism and the hope of a Messias-Redeemer. It was through these intermediate groups that religious propaganda finally reached the out-and-out pagans, those whom St. Luke calls "the Greeks."⁴

The preaching of the Christian missionaries was very successful; "the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believing, were converted to the Lord."⁵

News of this soon reached the Church at Jerusalem, which, by St. Peter's vision at Joppa and the circumstances accompanying the baptism of Cornelius, was prepared to understand and accept this extension of the apostolate. The "brethren" of Jerusalem sent one of their number, Barnabas, to Antioch to learn the facts.

Barnabas

The Levite Joseph, surnamed Barnabas (Bar Nebuah, "the preacher," or "the consoler") because of his zeal in preaching the word of God or because of his kindly and unselfish character which made him liked by all, was already a person of note in the assembly of the faithful. The Acts of the Apostles tells us that, at the very first, he sold a field and gave the

³ St. Jerome, *Liber de situ et nominibus locorum*; St. Augustine, *Sermones*, 1 de Macch.

⁴ Acts 11:20.

⁵ Acts 11:21.

money to the Apostles for the aid of the young community.⁶ When the converted Saul, as yet not fully trusted by the Christians, came to Jerusalem, it was Barnabas who introduced him to the assembly.⁷ Barnabas was a native of Cyprus, not far from Tarsus. It may be that he had already known Saul and, better than anyone else, could guarantee the sincerity of that whole-hearted and loyal man, incapable of deception. Barnabas "was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."⁸ He was tall and had a noble bearing, which at Lystra made the people take him for Jupiter. His repute and personal appearance carried weight with the people.⁹ The choice of Barnabas for the mission to Antioch was a happy one, for no one was in a better position to understand the new Apostolic campaign, in which some of his fellow-Cyprians had labored so effectively.

Barnabas came to Antioch, and not only approved the catholic movement that was developing there, but likewise decided to further it by increasing the number of the missionaries. His mind turned to his friend Saul, for he knew that ardent soul, open to great undertakings and full of zeal for the conversion of the Gentiles. He therefore went to Tarsus and soon afterwards brought Saul back with him.

St. Paul

The new missionary of Antioch was destined henceforth to occupy the first rank, if not in the hierarchy, of which Peter

⁶ Acts 4:37. This piece of land must have been at Jerusalem. In that city there lived a sister of Barnabas, or at least a near relative, named Mary, the mother of John Mark. (Coloss. 4:10; cf. Acts 12:12.)

⁷ Acts 9:27 f.

⁸ Acts 11:24.

⁹ St. Luke seems to say that Barnabas was one of the first converts of the Apostles, Acts 4:36; Eusebius (I, xii) and Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata*, II, xx) say that he was one of the seventy-two disciples. The Church gives him the title of Apostle, as it does St. Paul.

remained the unquestioned head, at least in the work of preaching the gospel. We might almost say that his history becomes the story of the spread of Christianity.

Saul of Tarsus was then in the full vigor of maturity, being a little more than forty years old. His person was not at first glance imposing. Being puny in appearance and fully aware of his outward defects,¹⁰ he trembled, as indeed he did throughout his life, at the very thought of facing a new audience. But throughout his life the commanding voice of his conscience and of his irresistible vocation impelled him to preach to all, in spite of everything, "in season and out of season," the faith in Christ who was his life. "Woe is unto me," he said, "if I preach not the gospel."

After his baptism and the curing of his blindness, he felt the need of visiting all the synagogues of Damascus to declare openly that he had seen with his own eyes, living and risen, that Jesus who had been ignominiously put to death and buried, who called Himself the Son of God. Then, leaving his coreligionists dazed at his declarations, but not doubting his word, he hastily fled from the tumult to spend some time in intimate converse with God. He set out for Arabia, that is, in all likelihood, for the Sinai peninsula. There, for a year or perhaps two years, he explored the meaning of the revelation he had received from God on the Damascus road and of the traditional teachings he received from the lips of Ananias. In the

¹⁰ With touching frankness, he refers to them in his Epistles (1 Cor. 2:3; 2 Cor. 10:1-10; cf. Acts 14:11). The somber features of this portrait were freely exaggerated in the Acts of Paul and Thecla in the fourth century, and in the Chronicle of John Malalas of Antioch, written in the sixth. They represent St. Paul as "short, bald, stout, with short legs, eyebrows meeting, prominent nose." These details, reported by enemies, are maliciously exaggerated. That St. Paul suffered greatly from periodic inflammation of the eyes, the best exegetes infer from several passages in his Epistles (Gal. 4:15; 6:11; 1 Thess. 3:1; 2 Tim. 4:16, etc.). This painful ailment, which the Apostle considered to be an "infirmity of the flesh" (Gal. 4:13), and other trials, possibly of a moral nature, he regarded as a providential offset to the visions and ecstasies with which he was favored (2 Cor. 12:1-9).

light of his new faith, he reread the Scriptures, which he had so long scrutinized under the direction of Gamaliel. Now he was equipped for controversy and exhortation; but not yet able to set forth his doctrine freely. At Damascus, when he came back there to preach, assassins were hired to murder him. He escaped only through the clever stratagem of friends, who let him down from the city wall in a basket. At Jerusalem, where he went to see Peter, he encountered new snares. He remained there only a fortnight. Then he returned to his native Tarsus, where for five or six years he again nourished his soul in silent prayer and study, no doubt holding in restraint, in heroic resignation to God's designs, his burning desire to preach Christ everywhere.¹¹ Thither Barnabas went to make Paul his companion in the apostolate, or rather his teacher and leader.

Paul and Barnabas

For a whole year Paul and Barnabas evangelized Antioch. There is no evidence that any act of authority or any popular disturbance impeded their zeal. We can easily imagine the two Apostles, one with his burning word, the other with his contagious piety, taking part in the conversations of this commercial population which was stirred, but not satisfied by feverish occupation in business and love for pleasure. We see them, now disputing with the orators in the market-place, now gathering the people about them at street corners, to show them the charming ideal of the beatitudes.¹² Conversions were rapid and many. Soon the Church at Antioch acquired a fame that raised it above all the Christian congregations of the time. On the other hand, the pagans understood that here was a society distinct from Judaism. From the name of Him who was ac-

¹¹ Cf. Prat, *La Théologie de saint Paul*, I, 65-67.

¹² In a street at Antioch, near the temple of all the gods, is pointed out the place where St. Paul is said to have preached to the multitude.

claimed by all His followers as their only Master, the pagans called them Christians (*χριστιανοί*).¹³

These Christians were not niggardly in testifying their charity toward the mother Church at Jerusalem. In the year 44, when the prophet Agabus foretold the famine that would afflict the holy city, the Christians of Antioch began at once to gather alms. Paul and Barnabas, accompanied by Titus, brought these alms to Jerusalem when the famine came, eighteen months later, shortly after the martyrdom of James the Greater. The terror of the persecution still weighed upon the city. Peter had returned from Rome and was there, as were also John and James the Less. James was appointed head of the local Church. The envoys from Antioch placed their offerings in the hands of the council of the ancients and profited by the occasion to explain the situation which Providence had brought about at Antioch. Peter, James, and John saw that a special grace had been given Paul for the conversion of the pagans,¹⁴ that he was the Apostle of the uncircumcised, as Peter was of the circumcised,¹⁵ and they simply asked the two missionaries to be mindful of the poor of Jerusalem.¹⁶ Probably even at that time it was possible to foresee that the state of wretchedness would continue in the Holy City, in the midst of almost ceaseless revolts and repressions, until the day of its final destruction. Paul promised the Apostles of Jerusalem never to forget their poor and kept his promise with unflinching fidelity.

Fortified with the approbation of those who were rightly regarded as "pillars" of the Church,¹⁷ Paul and Barnabas resumed their apostolate with new zeal. They went first to the island of Cyprus, the birthplace of Barnabas, where the pro-

¹³ Acts 11:26.

¹⁴ Gal. 2:9.

¹⁵ Gal. 2:8.

¹⁶ Gal. 2:10.

¹⁷ Gal. 2:9.

consul Sergius Paulus embraced the faith, and Saul—his name suddenly changed to Paul—took charge of the preaching. Returning to the continent, they evangelized Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, in short, the whole region that was known as Roman Galatia.¹⁸ Everywhere their method was the same. They would first appear in the synagogues, where they would preach as long as the Jews listened to them. But as soon as the door was closed to them, or a disturbance led to their expulsion, they boldly addressed the pagans. To their fellow-Jews they said: "Because you reject it [the word of God] . . . behold we turn to the Gentiles."¹⁹ Between the years 47 and 52 they founded no less than seven Christian centers.

But their very success was sure to involve their newly founded churches in a momentous dispute. It was impossible not to see that Antioch was the center of all the new Christian communities, and Paul seemed to be their leader. What, then, of the influence of the mother Church? In these new communities the Jewish observances were not all kept. What was happening to the ancient traditions? The Church at Jerusalem was being recruited by a considerable number of priests and Levites,²⁰ some of whom did not altogether forsake the narrowness of their rabbinical training and showed themselves extremely sensitive.

No doubt God had spoken to Peter at Joppa with regard to the centurion Cornelius. But the situation was now much

¹⁸ The scholarly works of Perrot (*De Galatia provincia romana*, Paris, 1867) and Ramsay (*Saint Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, London, 1900) have removed every doubt as to the location of Roman Galatia. It was Roman Galatia that St. Paul evangelized on his first missionary journey, and it was to the inhabitants of that district that he addressed his first Epistle. On this point and on certain important consequences with regard to the chronology of St. Paul's life, see Le Camus, *L'Œuvre des apôtres*, I, 84-89, 104 f. Cf. Belser, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*; Dufourcq, *L'Avenir du christianisme*, III, 27-29.

¹⁹ Acts 13: 46.

²⁰ Acts 6: 7. Cf. Acts 15: 5.

changed. The present issue was not whether to admit a pagan and his family into the Church, regardless of the Jewish legal observances, but whether a sort of federation of churches might be formed, with a center and a head, seeming to draw the disciples of Christ into a movement quite different from that over which Jerusalem had theretofore had the direction. Some half-converted Jewish priests were grieved to see the Holy City deprived of its primacy, the Temple abandoned, the work of Moses rejected. Their complaint was apparently sanctioned by the example of their chief, James the Less, who was seen to be so assiduous at prayer in the Temple, and so exact in fulfilling the prescriptions of the Law.²¹

Some years later the Council of Jerusalem made allowance for whatever was reasonable in these claims. Unfortunately certain ill-disposed persons embittered the dispute. Paul and Barnabas, at the time of their previous journey to Jerusalem, saw through the designs of "false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privately to spy our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into servitude."²² Some of these were simply narrow, obstinate men who would not for any reason give up a view once taken or a prejudice once formed. Others were jealous and malicious; in their bitter attacks on the Apostle and his labors, it seemed they aimed at the very work of Christ Himself in His most ardent missionary.²³

²¹ Hegesippus, in Eusebius, II, xxiii; Josephus, *Antiquities*, XX, ix.

²² Gal. 2:4.

²³ The Tübingen school makes no mistake in affirming the existence of a party ruthlessly hostile to St. Paul. But they are wrong when, without proof and even in face of most convincing evidence to the contrary, they attribute the inspiration and guidance of that party to St. Peter and St. James. We know what St. Peter's attitude was regarding the conversion of the Gentiles, and we see St. James joining in the conciliary declaration which disavowed the sect in question. Those whom St. Paul calls "false brethren unawares brought in" could not be Apostles. St. Epiphanius supposes that the future heretic Cerinthus belonged to this Judaizing sect. (*Haereses*, 26.)

Peter and Paul at Antioch

The storm broke loose shortly after the return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch. The two missionaries declared to their listeners that the hour was now at hand to open wide the door of faith to the Gentiles.²⁴ At this, some men, who had arrived from Jerusalem and claimed to speak in the name of the Apostles, rose up before them. St. Luke does not give us their names. St. Paul applies to them a word difficult to translate, which may refer to the haughtiness of their claims and the insufficiency of their authority (*ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι*), "super-apostles" or "apostles above measure."²⁵ They declared: "Except you be circumcised after the manner of Moses, you cannot be saved."²⁶ They succeeded in winning over part of the Antiochene Jews and made loud proclamation of their commission from the Church at Jerusalem. Their daring went farther. When Peter came to Antioch for the purpose of observing at close quarters the progress of the gospel in one of its most important phases, they appealed to him against Paul's methods. At the same time, they tried to stir up the principal Churches founded by Paul against him and his teaching.

Peter followed the line of conduct revealed to him at Joppa, freely mingling with the converted pagans. He was seen to sit at their tables, without concerning himself about the food that was served. The men from Jerusalem endeavored to persuade him that such conduct scandalized the Jews and troubled their consciences. Already, they said, a large part of the Antiochene Jews had risen up against Paul and the converted pagans. They advised Peter to live as a Jew, observing the Mosaic prescriptions, to restore confidence and peace. The Apostle of the circumcised,²⁷ moved by this reasoning, yielded. Little by little,

²⁴ Acts 14:26.

²⁵ See 2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11.

²⁶ Acts 15:1.

²⁷ Gal. 2:8.

to quiet the Jews, he discontinued his close relations with the converted pagans, ate with his fellow-Jews, and followed the same rules as they. Barnabas, too, weakened and was won over. Following them, a number of Christians began a strict observance of the Jewish regulations at their meals.

Paul saw the danger and judged that he was qualified to denounce it to Peter. At Jerusalem he had been officially recognized by the Apostles as the providential Apostle of the uncircumcised. It was evident that by Peter's present conduct the work which God had entrusted to him was threatened with failure. "To maintain circumcision, with the implied full observance of the Law, was to forego the hope of conquering the world. Never would the world become Jewish. The question of principle was graver still. To make a Mosaic practice an essential condition of salvation, was virtually to deny the transient nature of the old economy, the sufficiency of the Redemption, the value of the blood and merits of Jesus Christ, the efficacy of grace; this would be to overturn the fundamental dogma of Christianity." ²⁸ The Apostle of the Gentiles, therefore, was in duty bound to point out to the head of the Church the effects of his excessive condescension. In one of his Epistles he writes: "When I saw that they walked not uprightly unto the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all: 'If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as the Jews do, how dost thou compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?' " ²⁹ Peter yielded to Paul's reasoning,³⁰ and the danger dreaded by Paul seemed to be warded off.³¹

²⁸ Prat, *La Théologie de saint Paul*, I, 71.

²⁹ Gal. 2: 14.

³⁰ "Peter certainly yielded to Paul's reasons. If he had been obstinate, this whole affair, instead of being an argument in favor of St. Paul's gospel, would be a serious objection, which St. Paul could not have remembered without utterly ruining the thesis which was so dear to him." (Prat, *op. cit.*, I, 74.)

³¹ Such is this famous Antioch incident, reduced to its just historical proportions. Enemies of the Holy See have made a great fuss about it; and some

The Epistle to the Galatians

But the sect was not satisfied with acting merely at Antioch. Its emissaries had already visited the Christian communities of Galatia, disturbing the neophytes by the confidence with which they everywhere repeated their famous motto: "Without circumcision there is no salvation." Nothing could be more painful to Paul's heart. These earnest people of Galatia had received the faith of Christ with most enthusiastic eagerness and had welcomed the Apostles with marks of filial affection. With his own hand, in spite of the painful infirmity of his eyes, Paul wrote as best he could, in big letters,³² an epistle vibrating with feeling that he made no attempt to restrain.

The Epistle opens with a prayer for the increase of their charity:

"Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins." Then, without

apologists of the papacy have been so disturbed by it that they have gone to great lengths in an effort to prove that the Peter of this incident is not the Peter who was the head of the Church. We need scarcely say that neither the pope's infallibility nor his supreme authority in the Church is in any way involved in this passing disagreement. Peter's whole fault was in letting himself be momentarily circumvented by Judaizers, who misled him as to the effects of his conduct. As Tertullian says, "The fault was one of conduct, not of preaching, *conversationis fuit vitium, non praedicationis*." (*De praescriptione*, chap. 23.) Was St. Peter then living at Antioch? Tradition gives him the title of bishop of that city; and Antioch itself has always honored him as its first founder. (See Eusebius, *H. E.*, III, xxxvi, and *Chron.*, bk. 2.) In matter of fact, the Apostles were the bishops of all the churches that they founded; their authority over those churches may rightly be called an episcopate, but we should not imagine it organized like that of their successors. The latter, attached to a single church and residing there, were alone true bishops in the sense we give the word. But when Peter, the supreme head of the Apostolic College and of the whole Church, arrived at the "metropolis of the East," that city acclaimed him as its pastor. "There the name 'Christian' was born. Church history bears witness to the fact that this Church, though founded by St. Barnabas and St. Paul, recognized Peter, because of his lofty office, as its first pastor. Peter had to come there when it was so prominent for its brilliant profession of Christianity, and his chair at Antioch became a solemnity in the Churches." (Bossuet, *Sermon sur l'unité de l'Eglise*, 1st point.)

³² Gal. 6: 11.

any oratorical caution, the Apostle goes straight to the point: "There are some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we or an angel from heaven preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema. . . . The gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For neither did I receive it of man, nor did I learn it; but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion: how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God."

With a few masterful strokes Paul then describes his past life, his conversion, the divine lights granted him, and his relations with the other Apostles. In these lines, which we can feel were written hurriedly, Paul clearly sets forth the two unanswerable arguments on which he builds his whole contention: his doctrine comes to him directly from Christ and has been expressly and repeatedly confirmed by the chief Apostles, notably by Simon Peter. His solid guaranty is Christ's word, declared authentic by the hierarchy. Why, then, should he retreat? For, he says, "if I build up again the things which I have destroyed, I make myself a prevaricator." Why return to the letter of the Law, when we have the grace of Christ? This thought of the grace of Christ transports him. He says:

"With Christ I am nailed to the cross. And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me. And that I live now in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself for me. . . . O senseless Galatians, who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been set forth, crucified among you?"

The Law has, indeed, been appealed to, and Moses. Is there any question of setting up the faith in opposition to the Law, Christ in opposition to Moses? Not at all. The Apostle asks only that the Law of Moses should not make anyone forget the

promises made to Abraham and realized by the grace of Christ. Between Abraham and Christ, Moses gave the Law to restrain passions, to maintain faithfulness to the promises, and to prepare for the advent of grace.

"The Law was our pedagogue in Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after the faith is come, we are no longer under a pedagogue."

But all this is argument. The Apostle is eager to speak more directly to the heart of his dear Galatians. He writes:

"You know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel to you heretofore; and your temptation in my flesh, you despised not nor rejected. . . . I bear you witness that, if it could be done, you would have plucked out your own eyes and would have given them to me. . . . They would exclude you, that you might be zealous for them. . . . My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you. And I would willingly be present with you now, and change my voice."

Then the Apostle returns to his argument. Taking his stand on his enemies' ground, he makes use of a thoroughly rabbinical logic, an allegorical interpretation of the story of Agar and Sara. The Christian is not the child of a slave; he is a free man. The Epistle continues:

"We are not the children of the bondwoman, but of the free: by the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free. . . . Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. . . . The fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity. . . . Against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences."

Such are the main lines of the famous Epistle to the Galatians, in which Paul opens his soul to his disciples. Its style is

simple, picturesque, and sincere, at times hesitant, as though beneath the weight of a crushing thought, like the feeble body of the Apostle; again it is proud, brilliant, reaching the sublime, under the impulse of a superhuman inspiration.

The Council of Jerusalem

History does not tell us what effect was produced by this letter to the Galatians. But we do know that very soon the trouble sprang up again at Antioch. So intense did it become that the brethren at Antioch decided upon an appeal to the Apostles and ancients at Jerusalem.³³ From them it was that these dissenters said they had received their commission; to them the Antiochene Christians turned to have the pending conflict settled by a competent authority that was recognized by all.

The delegates from Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas at their head, set out, by way of Phenicia and Samaria, for the Holy City. Their solemn reception by the Apostles and ancients³⁴ shows that the latter wished to repudiate any solidarity with the coterie that had stirred up so many disputes. But this party, which had its center in Jerusalem and claimed to have connection with the supreme religious authority of the city,³⁵ was ready to renew its attacks. It was violently aggressive. No doubt it repeated all the curses of the old rabbis against violation of the Law.

³³ Acts 15:2.

³⁴ Acts 15:4.

³⁵ The expression *τινὰς ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου*, which St. Paul uses (Gal. 2:12), may signify persons who claimed to have been sent by James or who were in his entourage. This is the most likely interpretation of the text. "Anyhow, we should not wonder if this old man who, from the testimony of St. Epiphanius [*Haereses*, LXXVIII, 14], was then from 85 to 88 years old, and had never left his Palestinian surroundings, had not fully realized the situation at Antioch, and judged things not exactly in the same way as did Peter and Paul." (Tixeront, *History of Dogmas*, I, 151.)

The Apostles and ancients were assembled in council. All were waiting to hear what Peter and James would say. "Men, brethren," said Peter, "you know that in former days God made choice among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knoweth the hearts, gave testimony, giving unto them the Holy Ghost, as well as to us. . . . Now therefore, why tempt you God to put a yoke upon the necks of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?"

After Peter finished speaking, "all the multitude held their peace." It was not easy to say anything against words so full of authority and good sense. Paul and Barnabas were brought into the council to tell "what great signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them." Then James arose. Although Peter's hierarchical authority was beyond dispute among the faithful, yet James' moral authority was universal at Jerusalem, even in the Jewish world. His regular attendance at the Temple had gained him the particular esteem of the zealots; his being a "brother of the Lord" won him exceptional deference. After citing certain words of the prophets, he concluded by saying: "I judge that they who from among the Gentiles are converted to God, are not to be disquieted. But that we write unto them that they refrain themselves from the pollution of idols and from fornication (*πορνεία*) and from things strangled and from blood."

This was clearly an acceptance in principle of the law of liberty proclaimed by Peter and Paul. But it also took into account the need of managing the transition cautiously. The whole assembly agreed to the view expressed by James. The prohibition against eating blood and things strangled went back to the early days of the world. God had given this prohibition to Noe for the purpose of inculcating in his descendants respect for human life. The ban on food offered to idols

was intended to inspire a horror of idolatry. The word "fornication" in this passage probably means marriage between relatives within the degrees of consanguinity and affinity forbidden by the Book of Leviticus.³⁶

The Council of Jerusalem then drew up the following decree: "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay no further burden upon you than these necessary things: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication. From which things keeping yourselves, you shall do well."³⁷ In the letter written to the Church at Antioch we find these additional words: "Some going out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, to whom we gave no commandment."³⁸

This assembly, which took place about the year 51, is commonly spoken of as the Council of Jerusalem.³⁹ Besides giving the faithful a rule of conduct, the Apostles and ancients proclaimed a rule of faith by refusing, contrary to the claims of Christians overly imbued with the Pharisaic spirit, to recognize circumcision and the Jewish observances as necessary for salvation. The rule of conduct which was laid down could have only a passing significance. As St. Thomas Aquinas says, "its only purpose was to facilitate the union of Gentiles and Jews living together, and it therefore ceased in course of time;

³⁶ This is the view of Father Prat, *La Théologie de saint Paul*, I, 76. Le Camus (*L'Œuvre des apôtres*, I, 161) holds a like opinion. In any case, the decree cannot refer to the sin of fornication as such. It is concerned with determining certain outward and public facts, which are capable of serving as the ground for admission into or exclusion from the Christian society. According to the Book of Leviticus, cohabitation within forbidden degrees is a heinous deed (*revelare turpitudinem*). (Lev. 18: 7-18.)

³⁷ Acts 15: 28 f.

³⁸ Acts 15: 24.

³⁹ Melchoir Cano (*De locis theologicis*, V, 4) considers it a provincial council; Torrecrémata (*De ecclesia*), a diocesan council; Benedict XIV (*De synodo dioecesana*, I, i, 5), a sort of council. Some authors look upon it as a tribunal rather than a council. (Le Camus, *L'Œuvre des apôtres*, II, 153.)

when the cause ceased, the effect would likewise disappear.”⁴⁰

St. Luke relates that the Christians of Antioch received the decree of Jerusalem enthusiastically.⁴¹ Henceforth the road to the Gentiles was wide open to the Apostles, and Antioch could be proud of having been the starting point of this movement of free expansion.

The Judaizing party did not, however, lay down their arms; they merely changed their tactics. Finding they could no longer hope to shelter themselves under hierarchical authority, they set up for a schismatic sect with chiefs of their own. The Epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter, St. Jude, and St. James supply a few valuable data about this revolt and schism. St. Paul, writing to the Colossians some time between 58 and 63, warns

⁴⁰ *Summa theologica*, Ia 2ae, q. 103, a. 4. St. Paul (1 Cor. 8:4-10) interprets the decree somewhat broadly. It is possible that the Jerusalem decree, in its practical regulation, was not observed everywhere, but only where there was a question of scandal for certain Jews. Thus are explained the numerous texts gathered by German scholars to cast doubt upon the authenticity of the Council of Jerusalem, because it is supposed that it was not applied in some places. For references of all these texts, see Dufourcq, *L'Avenir du christianisme*, III, 22. The authenticity of the account of the Council, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, is attacked on the ground that St. Paul recounts it differently in his Epistle to the Galatians. This difficulty does not exist for those who, like us, agree with Le Camus (*op. cit.*), Belser (*Einleitung in das Neue Testament*), Weber (*Die Abfassung des Galaterbriefes vor dem Apostelkonzil*), and Round (*The Date of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*), that the Epistle to the Galatians is anterior to the Council of Jerusalem and that it relates a journey made by St. Paul to Jerusalem in the year 47. The provisional character of the practical regulations promulgated by the Council, and their early abandonment, account for the numerous variants of the decree, as found in the manuscripts. The copyists, thinking to correct an error, altered the text to make it conform to the practice of their time. Amidst these divergencies, the critics distinguish two versions: the Eastern and the Western, but they are not agreed on the question which version is the earlier. At all events, the fact of these variants does not affect the authenticity and the substantial integrity of the decree. On this question, see a scholarly article by Coppieters in the *Revue biblique*, 1907, pp. 35 ff. The so-called "Canons of the Council of Antioch," discovered in 1572 by Father Torres, S.J., have proved to be apocryphal; they were composed at Antioch about the year 360. The critical questions concerning the Council of Jerusalem are summed up by Leclercq in Hefele, *Histoire des Conciles* (French transl.), vol. I, part 2, pp. 1070 ff.

⁴¹ Acts 15:31.

the faithful against false doctrines that are "according to the tradition of men," "according to the elements of the world,"⁴² and not according to Christ."⁴³ In his pastoral Epistles he names some of the leaders of the sect: Hymeneus, Alexander, and Philetus.⁴⁴ He also mentions their disputes over words, their idle questions, and the endless patriarchal genealogies to which they appealed.⁴⁵ St. Peter and St. Jude denounce their contempt for authority and their denial of the coming of the Lord.⁴⁶ St. John declares that at the time he was writing certain Antichrists, who had come from the ranks of Christians, denied that Jesus was the Son of God or the Christ, and said that He was only a man and had only the appearance of a body.⁴⁷ In these details, as also in those to be found in the Apocalypse,⁴⁸ we can recognize the germ of Ebionitism and Docetism. In the spread of Christianity, its chief auxiliary had been Judaism; but soon the Judaizing spirit became its principal internal enemy.

It is impossible to deny the existence of the Judaizing sects in Palestine during the Apostolic age, and there is reason to believe that the party condemned by the Council of Jerusalem formed the nucleus of that sect. But it would be a serious mistake to exaggerate, as Baur does, the extent of their influence, by misunderstanding the perfect orthodoxy of those "churches of God which are in Judea," which, as St. Paul testifies in his

⁴² By these "elements of the world," St. Paul means the elementary religious institutions, Jewish or other, which could serve as a preparation for the Christian faith for one who knew how to pass beyond them, but which could be an obstacle to the faith for those who let themselves be seduced and halted by them.

⁴³ Coloss. 2: 8.

⁴⁴ See 1 Tim. 1: 20; 2 Tim. 2: 17.

⁴⁵ See 1 Tim. 1: 4; 4: 7; 6: 3-5. Today exegetes generally hold that the "endless genealogies" spoken of in the Epistle are fabulous genealogies to be found in certain Jewish apocrypha, not the genealogies of the eons. (Jacquier, *Histoire des livres du Nouveau Testament*, I, 375.)

⁴⁶ See 2 Pet. 2: 10 f.; Jude 8.

⁴⁷ See 1 John 2: 18 f., 22 f.; 4: 2, 3, 15.

⁴⁸ Apoc. 2: 9, 14-16, 20-25.

Epistle to the Thessalonians, suffered from those Jews "prohibiting us to speak to the Gentiles, that they may be saved."⁴⁹ The Acts of the Apostles also mentions Christian communities in Galilee, in Samaria, and on the coast of the Mediterranean. "The term Judæo-Christianity, strictly speaking, applies only to those Christians, born in Judaism, who looked upon the Law as still binding, and who therefore found themselves engaged in an irreconcilable conflict, not only with St. Paul, but with all Christianity."⁵⁰

But in the daughter churches, two currents still appear: that of the *Ecclesia ex Judæis*, made up of Christians of Jewish birth, who continued to observe the Law, and that of the *Ecclesia ex Gentibus*, made up of non-Jewish Christians, for whom the Law, though certainly of divine institution, had been provisional, and was now abolished. Beginning with the Council of Jerusalem, this latter current takes on a preponderant rôle. The triumphant formula is decidedly that of the Epistle to the Galatians: "Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision availeth anything, but a new creature. And whosoever shall follow this rule, peace on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."⁵¹ In fact, and justly so, all the bonds are broken.⁵²

Internal Development of the Church

In the Church thus freed, the organization, the form of worship, and the symbol of faith developed in a more autonomous way. There is a very precious document which contains a wealth of information about the Christian life of this period: it is the *Didache*, or *Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles*,

⁴⁹ See 1 Thess. 2: 14-16.

⁵⁰ Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, p. 238; Harnack, *History of Dogma*, I, 289.

⁵¹ Gal. 6: 15 f.

⁵² For a detailed study of the relations of the Christian Church with Judaism, and for its progressive separation therefrom, see Batiffol, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-36.

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written some time between 70 and 100, but echoing traditions that are earlier than the date of its composition. It is the work of a Judaeo-Christian, who, in the opinion of some authors, wrote at Antioch,⁵³ but who, at any rate, clearly has in view the situation brought about in the Church by the apostolate of Paul and Barnabas at Antioch.⁵⁴

The organization of the hierarchy presents a stage of development intermediate between that shown in the Acts of the Apostles and that revealed by the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. Apostles, prophets, doctors, *episkopoi-presbyteroi*,⁵⁵ and deacons: these are the ministers who seem to be entrusted with distinct functions.

First we must distinguish from all the rest the Apostles in the strict sense of the word, "the Twelve." They exercise a double function in the churches: that of founders and that of pastors. As founders of the Church, in dependence upon Christ and the Holy Ghost, they are invested with special prerogatives, the chief ones being doctrinal infallibility, universal jurisdiction, and the possibility of receiving a divine revelation for the direction of the universal Church. We shall see the Church appeal to the authority of the Apostles as a decisive test in controversies. No territorial circumscription limits their powers. When they feel the need of acting in concert, as at the Council of Jerusalem, or when St. Paul declares that he does not wish to "build upon another man's

⁵³ Bestmann, *Geschichte der Christlichen Sitte*, Part II, pp. 136-153.

⁵⁴ The *Didache* was widely known among the Christians until the fall of the Roman Empire, and was then lost. It was refound at Constantinople by Ph. Bryennios, who published the text in 1883. Cf. Hemmer, "*La Doctrine des douze apôtres*," in the *Revue d'histoire et de littérature religieuse*, 1907, pp. 193 ff.

⁵⁵ We do not translate these Greek terms, because the *episkopos* is not necessarily what we call "bishop," and the *presbyteros* may be a bishop. We saw above that all the *presbyteroi* took part in the Council of Jerusalem; and the Acts of the Apostles, when recounting St. Paul's farewell to the pastors of the Church of Ephesus, calls them now *presbyteroi*, and again *episkopoi*. (Acts 20: 17-28.) St. Jerome says: "*Eosdem episcopos illo tempore quos et prebyteros appellabant.*" (*Comment in Epist. ad Titum*, 1: 5.)

foundation,"⁵⁶ this is because of a spirit of discretion and prudence, or because of an intimate dependence upon the Holy Ghost. These extraordinary privileges disappear with the last of the twelve Apostles. No one thereafter is able to appeal to them except the Roman Pontiff, and the era of public revelation closes at the death of the last of them. As to the teaching and disciplinary authority which they exercise as pastors, that will last until the end of the world and will be handed down by perpetual succession.

But the name "Apostles" was also given, even in the New Testament writings, to other persons besides the Twelve. Barnabas is called an apostle,⁵⁷ as also are Andronicus and Junias;⁵⁸ and St. Paul says that Christ, after appearing to Peter and to the Eleven, appeared to more than five hundred brethren, then to James, and lastly to all the Apostles.⁵⁹

When the *Didache* speaks of Apostles, without specifying that it refers to the Twelve, it means ministers sent out on mission. An apostle is an "envoy of the Lord." He should not stop in one place more than a day, or at most two days. If he remains three days, he is a false prophet.⁶⁰ The apostle has a claim only to his nourishment; he should be given nothing except some bread for his sustenance until he reaches his next stopping-place. If he asks for money, he is a false prophet.⁶¹

Among the sacred ministers, after the apostles the *Didache* mentions the prophets. The apostolic writings speak of the ministry of prophecy.⁶² St. Paul refers to the part taken by

⁵⁶ Rom. 15: 20.

⁵⁷ Acts 14: 4, 13.

⁵⁸ Rom. 16: 7.

⁵⁹ See 1 Cor. 15: 5-8. It might be supposed that the text refers to the Twelve, if the context did not seem to indicate that there is question of others besides them.

⁶⁰ *Didache*, xi, 5.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, xi, 6.

⁶² Eusebius, III, xxxvii.

prophets in the Christian assemblies,⁶³ and the Acts of the Apostles mentions by name the principal prophets in the Church at Antioch.⁶⁴ They are men who, like the prophets of the Old Law, speak under the direct action of the Holy Spirit and who at times foretell future events.⁶⁵ But the prophets of the *Didache* appear to have, if not an altogether different character, at least a different importance in the Church. What were their special functions? Were they from the ranks of the laity, endowed with charismatic gifts, which circumstances made conspicuous? Or did they hold some rank in the hierarchy? On this interesting and difficult question no definite answer can be given.⁶⁶

⁶³ See 1 Cor., chap. 14.

⁶⁴ Acts 13: 1.

⁶⁵ E. g., Agabus; Acts 11: 28; 21: 10.

⁶⁶ One cannot help being impressed by the place which the prophets hold in the *Didache*. They are mentioned fifteen times, whereas the doctors and apostles are spoken of only three times, the *episkopoi* and deacons only once. To the prophets only are given the firstfruits (xiii, 3); they have the right to form assemblies (xi, 11), and they are called the high priests of the Christians (xiii, 3). Yet most writers do not consider that these indications are sufficient to regard the prophets as hierarchical chiefs. These authors note that all the ecclesiastical writers of the first centuries, from St. Paul to St. Irenaeus, passing through St. Clement of Rome, St. Ignatius, St. Justin, and all the witnesses of that period cited by Eusebius, declare that the leaders of the Church are the *episkopoi*, and this notwithstanding the persistence of the prophetic ministry in the Church until the close of the second century. (On this persistence, see Justin, *Dial.*, 87, 88; *First Apology*, 67; Irenaeus, *Haereses*, xi, 34; Eusebius, *H. E.*, V, xvi, xvii.) Moreover, there is no evidence to corroborate the meaning which at first glance would seem to result from the *Didache*. It is said that the emphasis with which the *Didache* speaks of the prophets is explicable if we admit that this collection of maxims and precepts, composed at Antioch or in one of those cities with a large admixture of pagans, where disturbed souls eagerly gathered around preachers and seers, became an echo of the exceptional testimonies of respect and honor with which Christian prophets were then surrounded, an echo also of the liberty granted them at times to convoke assemblies (supposing that the words *ποιῶν εἰς μυστήριον κοσμικὸν ἐκκλησίῳ* mean: convoking assemblies, and not: acting in view of the earthly mystery of the Church, as several scholars translate them. Cf. Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, pp. 107 f.) The gifts that were offered to the prophets are likewise explicable, if it is supposed that, being travellers or foreign to the countries where they were preaching, they generally had no possessions and practised no trade. It may also be held that, because of the relative liberty ac-

After the apostles and prophets, the *Didache* mentions the doctors or *didascals*. From the Acts of the Apostles we know that there were doctors in the Church at Antioch.⁶⁷ Like the prophet, the doctor was a minister of the word; the former spoke under the action of the Spirit, whereas the latter spoke according to knowledge acquired in the ordinary way. Several times doctors are spoken of by Hermas, the pseudo-Clementine Homilies, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen.

corded them, as attested by St. Paul, a liberty by virtue of which any one of the faithful then took part in the divine service (1 Cor., chap. 14), and because of the particular rôle which the prophets filled, they were given the name of high priest, which, in the time of Christ, was no longer reserved exclusively to the high priest actually in office. (Jacquier, *La Doctrine des douze apôtres*, p. 232.) In reality, we are told, the rôle of the prophets seems always to have been restricted to preaching and the edification of the faithful. We should bear in mind that, "before becoming a tradition that is maintained, Christianity is a 'word' that is propagated." (Batiffol, *op. cit.*, p. 108.) The prophets of whom we are speaking, were bearers of the Christian word at the time when that word had a determining part in the Church's destiny. Hence, great homage was given them. Despite these arguments, many authors of note consider that the word "prophets" in the *Didache* means actual rulers of particular churches, real bishops, whether at that period it was judged fitting to raise to the episcopal office a certain number of prophets, who retained their former title, or whether the title of "prophet," then so highly esteemed, was used to designate the chief of the *episkopoi*. We may indeed note that at this period, the Churches are invariably governed by a council of *presbyteroi-episkopoi*, with one of their number at their head and, moreover, we nowhere find a special title to designate this chief, unless it be the name of prophet. In the Acts of the Apostles, the prophets Judas and Silas are called chiefs, *ἡγούμενοι*, the very name which is given to the chiefs of the communities to which the Epistle to the Hebrews is addressed. St. Clement of Rome calls the bishop *archiereus*, the very title here given to the prophets. And we can well understand that the word "prophet," applied to the bishops, was transitory. So long as the twelve Apostles lived, they were the chiefs of the *presbyteroi* in the churches which they founded, and soon after the period of which the *Didache* speaks, the council of *presbyteroi-episkopoi* disappeared nearly everywhere, giving way to a single *episkopos*: this word naturally prevailed as the designation of the chief of the particular church. Michiels, in a scholarly article in the *Dictionnaire apologetique de la foi catholique* (I, 1768), thus concludes the critical study of the various texts of the *Didache* regarding the prophets: "We distinguish these prophets, clothed with a sacred character, from those who are prophets simply because they have the charisma of prophecy; and we think the former were missionary bishops. This is the key to the interpretation of the various passages cited." We share this view.

⁶⁷ Acts 13: 1.

The *Didache*, after directing the faithful to meet together on Sundays for the "breaking of bread" and for the giving of thanks, adds: "Appoint therefore for yourselves *episkopoi*." ⁶⁸ It then briefly indicates the qualities these should have, and their functions. They must be "worthy of the Lord, meek men, and not lovers of money, truthful and approved, for they also minister to you the ministry of the prophets and teachers." ⁶⁹ If we compare these words with what we know from contemporary sources—St. Paul, St. Clement, St. Ignatius, and St. Justin—and from archeological monuments of the time, they suggest the greatness of the ministry confided to the *episkopoi*. They are ministers of the Eucharistic sacrifice described in the preceding lines of the *Didache*.⁷⁰ For this reason they should be "worthy of the Lord." They must be "meek," as becomes those who have the duty of governing their brethren; "not lovers of money," for they have to administer the possessions of the community; "truthful and approved," because, as resident ministers, they must teach the community and preach—a duty that the prophets and doctors performed only in passing.

The word *episkopos* (bishop) was taken from the administrative institutions of the Greeks, who thus designated a civil official having an office of superintendence and inspection. The term was soon applied exclusively to the head of a particular Church. As the *Didache* uses this word only in the plural, some historians have thought that the title at that time given to the head of the local Church was "prophet."

Subject to the orders of this head, whatever name we give him, were the ancients or *presbyteroi*, who at that period and for some time afterwards, met together in a council, called

⁶⁸ *Didache*, xv, 1.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Funk and Harnack have noted the importance of the conjunction *οὐν* connecting the two clauses. "Appoint therefore . . ." (Harnack, *The Constitution and Law of the Church in the First Two Centuries*, p. 79.)

presbyteral (*presbyterion*). Many indications, which we need not dwell upon, lead us to suppose (though we cannot be quite positive) that, at the period spoken of by the *Didache*, these ancients had the "powers of orders," of a bishop—for instance, that of ordaining priests—though not possessing the "powers of jurisdiction." The title "ancient" is of Jewish origin. Among the Jews it was customary to entrust the direction of each synagogue to a council of ancients.⁷¹

Upon this institution the Apostles modeled the organization of their first communities. St. Paul admonishes Timothy to remember the grace he received by the imposition of the hands of the ancients,⁷² and St. Peter implores the ancients to feed the flock entrusted to them.⁷³ Before long the meaning of the word became precise. After the death of the Twelve, when each separate church was placed under the direction of a single chief, when the institution of the council of elders disappeared, and the word "bishop" took on its own meaning, the title "elder" or "ancient" was used only of simple priests. This is the meaning of the word in St. Ignatius' letter, in which he congratulates the Ephesians on the happy circumstance that their ancients (*i. e.*, priests) are united to their *episkopos* (*i. e.*, bishop) like the strings of a lyre.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Jacquier, *La Doctrine des douze apôtres*, p. 242.

⁷² See 1 Tim. 4:14.

⁷³ See 1 Pet. 5:1-5.

⁷⁴ St. Ignatius, *Ephesians*, 4. On the important question of the distinction between the presbyterate and the episcopate, see Prat, art. "*Evêques*," in the *Dict. de théol.* The learned author proves: (1) that from the very beginning no trace is found of an "amorphous church"; for all the churches had chiefs, who are called sometimes presiding officers (1 Thess. 5:12; Rom. 12:8), sometimes directors (Heb. 13:7, 24; Acts 15:22), or angels (Apoc. 1:20), or pastors (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2; Ephes. 4:11), but most often overseers or elders (*presbyteroi*); (2) that there was lack of uniformity in the organization of the primitive churches, at least until the death of the Apostles and the disappearance of the charisma; (3) that the episcopate is of Apostolic origin; as to this, no doubt can be entertained in the face of the testimony of St. Clement at Rome, St. Irenaeus at Lyons, Tertullian in Africa, and Clement of Alexandria. (Cf. Michiels, art. "*Evêques*," in the *Dict. apol. de la foi catholique*.)

As to the deacons, concerning whom we have already learned from earlier documents, the *Didache* supplies no additional light on their duties. Their domain continues to be that of works of zeal and charity, preaching, and the service of the poor.

If we consider the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the latter half of the first century as a whole, as it is described in the *Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles*, it appears to be nearly always on the move. The apostle, the prophet, the doctor, in a word the "itinerant minister," occupy the stage more frequently than the resident clergy, who, however, have the duty of supervising and controlling them.⁷⁵ The missionary is more conspicuous than the ordinary priest or the bishop: he is the center about whom the multitude gathers. To him go the people's offerings; and more than once we find the prophet even taking part in the functions of divine worship. But as the individual churches become organized in a more stable manner, the bishop's authority emerges more emphatically. Soon we find the bishop's pastoral function absorbing all the functions of the apostle, prophet, and doctor. These latter have only a transient place in the hierarchy, and disappear from it in the second century.

Liturgy and Ritual

The *Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles* supplies information on the liturgy no less interesting than on the hierarchy. The Christian's life is described as a life of prayer. He must pray at least three times a day.⁷⁶ From other sources we know that the hours for prayer were the third, the sixth, and the ninth,⁷⁷ i. e., nine o'clock in the morning, noon, and three o'clock in the afternoon. The Christian's attitude at prayer was usually

⁷⁵ *Didache*, XI, 1-12. Cf. Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, pp. 109 f.

⁷⁶ *Didache*, VIII, 3.

⁷⁷ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VII, 7.

that of the orant, standing, bareheaded, with hands raised to the level of the shoulders. The Jews ordinarily prayed with their head covered; slaves were not permitted to uncover their head; but St. Paul directed Christians to pray bareheaded, like free men.

Outside the fixed times of prayer, the Christians were urged "to seek daily the presence of the saints (*i. e.*, other Christians, their brethren), that they might find rest in their words," ⁷⁸ and to "be frequently gathered together seeking the things which are profitable for their souls." ⁷⁹ On Sunday, the Lord's Day, they are to confess their sins, be reconciled with their brethren if there have been any quarrels between them, and to offer the sacrifice. ⁸⁰

The prayer formulas mentioned in the *Didache* are the Lord's Prayer and the prayers accompanying the reception of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. The Lord's Prayer is quoted verbatim, along with the following doxology: "For Thine is the power and the glory for ever," ⁸¹ a doxology that recalls the formula in Paralipomenon: "Thine, Jehovah, is greatness, power and majesty, victory and magnificence." ⁸²

Brief but exact information is given about Baptism. Whoever is to be baptized, prepares himself by a day or two of fasting. ⁸³ First he must be taught all that he is to believe. ⁸⁴ He will be brought to some body of running water—spring, brook, or river ⁸⁵—because running water, being fresher and purer than stagnant water, is a better symbol of the regenerating and refreshing action of the Sacrament. If living

⁷⁸ *Didache*, IV, 2.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, XVI, 2.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, XIV, 1 f.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, VIII, 2.

⁸² I Par. 29: 11.

⁸³ *Didache*, VII, 4.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, VII, 1.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*.

water is not to be had, other water may be used, that has been gathered in some receptacle; in this case the water is poured three times on the head of the person to be baptized, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."⁸⁶ This is the earliest mention we have of baptism by pouring. This method which, as we have already stated, must have been employed in the beginning by the Apostles on various occasions and by way of exception, later disappeared from the current practice of the Church in consequence of the regular building of baptismal pools, which happened wherever Christian communities gathered together and where baptism by immersion was practiced.⁸⁷ Baptism by pouring, used only for sick people, was no longer administered except in case of absolute necessity.

It has been remarked how carefully the *Doctrine of the Apostles* enumerates sins;⁸⁸ it even arranges them in two lists, which, after a fashion, might be considered early examinations of conscience.⁸⁹ It clearly affirms that sins can be forgiven.⁹⁰ We know also that in Antioch, at the beginning of the second century, sinners could obtain remission of their faults by applying to the bishop.⁹¹ The self-accusation of sins, spoken of in the *Didache*,⁹² may not have been a sacramental, but a simple ritualistic confession, similar to that which the Jews used to make to one another in their synagogues.⁹³

Likewise it is not sure that chapters 9 and 10, containing

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, VII, 3.

⁸⁷ De Rossi, *Bullettino di archeologia cristiana*, 1886, p. 19.

⁸⁸ *Didache*, chaps. 1 to 5.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, chap. 5.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, XI, 7.

⁹¹ St. Ignatius, *Ad Phil.*, chap. 8.

⁹² *Didache*, IV, 14; XIV, 1.

⁹³ Buxtorf, *Synagoga judaica*, chap. 20. Cf. Morin, *De poenitentia*, bk. 4, chap. 2, nos. 21 f. Such, at least, is the view of several eminent Catholic scholars, e. g., Funk, *Patres apostolici*, I, 14, 32.

thanksgiving prayers with regard to a mysterious meal, refer to the Eucharist. The meal alluded to may have been the purified and Christianized continuation of the *Kiddush*, or Jewish religious meal, and the invocations preceding and following it may be regarded as something like our blessing or grace before and after meals.⁹⁴ In chapter 14, however, the mention of the Eucharist is beyond doubt.

"On the Lord's Day come together, break bread and hold Eucharist [give thanks], after confessing your transgressions, that your

⁹⁴ Batiffol (*Études d'histoire et de théologie positive*, pp. 71-78), Cagin (*L'Eucharistie*, p. 254), Duchesne (*Bull. crit.*, 1884, p. 385) and Ladeuze (*Revue de l'Orient chrétien*, 1902, pp. 339-399) think that there is question here of both the Agape and the Eucharist. The question of the Agape is of considerable apologetic importance. Most Rationalists hold that originally the Eucharistic supper was merely an ordinary meal which, after long evolution, became divided into two distinct ceremonies: the Eucharist and the Agape. Among the noteworthy books on this subject, is that of Baumgartner, *Eucharistie und Agape im Urchristentum*. The learned author cites and minutely analyzes a vast number of texts, grouped according to the countries whose practice they show. Then he states the following conclusions: in the first century we find, in all Christian centers that we know of, institutions that are perceptibly identical with regard to the Agape and the Eucharist. On Sundays, early in the morning or sometimes about midnight—the hour of the Lord's Resurrection—the Christians met together to celebrate the Eucharist. This latter is connected with religious instruction and includes essentially the prayer of thanksgiving pronounced by the bishop over the bread and wine; the people take part in this liturgical function by saying the *Amen* and by receiving Communion. Sunday evening the Christians, following an old Jewish custom, take their meal in common, and this image of their brotherly love is also an occasion for them to refresh and succour their needy brethren: it is the Agape, a meal sanctified by prayer and by the exercise of the charismata of tongues and of prophecy; the celebration of the Eucharist was never connected with this evening meal, but, according to St. Paul (1 Cor., chap. 11), the Agape was an image of the great love which Christ showed to His disciples at the Last Supper. "Baumgartner's work," says Vanhalst (*Revue d'histoire ecclési.*, 1911, p. 721), "forms a solid defense of the Roman conception of the Eucharist. It is of genuine scientific value, harmonizing with the dogmatic conceptions of Catholic tradition." Yet, on several points, particularly on the subject of the Jewish prayers recited before the meal, Baumgartner's study should be supplemented by that of Mangenot, "*Les soi-disant antécédents juifs de l'Eucharistie*," in the *Revue du clergé français*, 1909, pp. 385 ff., and by that of Batiffol, "*Nouvelles études documentaires sur la sainte Eucharistie*," in the *Revue du clergé français*, LX, 513.

offering may be pure; but let none who has a quarrel with his fellow join in your meeting until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice be not defiled. For this is that which was spoken by the Lord, 'In every place and time offer me a pure sacrifice, for I am a great king,' saith the Lord, 'and my name is wonderful among the heathen.' Appoint therefore for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord."⁹⁵

There has been much insistence upon the identity of the Lord's sacrifice (*θυσία*) with that of Malachias, and thereby the comparison of the Lord's sacrifice with the Old Testament sacrifices; this leaves no doubt as to the agreement of chapter 14 with the Apostolic and universal Eucharist of the Lord.⁹⁶ That is indeed the "breaking of bread," the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, spoken of by St. Paul and St. Justin.⁹⁷

True, the words of institution, the words of consecration, are not mentioned. It is not explicitly said that the bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ, as was later specified in the paraphrase given of this passage in the *Apostolic Constitutions*. But we should not forget that the *Didache* was a manual of piety for the use of the ordinary Christian, and not a ritual.⁹⁸ Moreover, if we consider the time and place of this book's composition, after Christianity's first contact with the Greco-Roman world, which was so avid of mysteries and so accustomed to look upon Oriental ceremonies as curious symbols, we are not surprised that the Christians were fear-

⁹⁵ *Didache*, xiv, 1-3; xv, 1.

⁹⁶ Cagin, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

⁹⁷ We do not understand how Rauschen (*Eucharistie und Bussakrament in den ersten 6 Jahrhunderten der Kirche*, p. 2) can say that one may hardly appeal to the *Didache* in favor of the Real Presence. If that text were isolated, doubtless it would be obscure; but when compared with so many other Apostolic, patristic, and archeological texts, its interpretation leaves no doubt.

⁹⁸ The prayer formulas given by the *Didache* are, moreover, only indications. We know that, in those early years, the celebrant himself improvised prayers. That practice continued until the fourth and even the fifth century. See Cagin, *Te Deum ou Illatio*, p. 342, and Souben, *Le Canon primitif de la messe*, p. 12.

ful of handing over the holiest of their mysteries to the extremely fanciful and perchance insulting interpretations of the pagans. Herein we find one of the circumstances that best explain the spontaneous origin of the "law of the secret," which did not rest on any written text, but upon a custom that was equivalent to a law and that assuredly had a solid justification. "The way of the Eucharistic prayers as given in the *Didache*—by suppressing the formulas most closely connected with the mysteries—was in accord with the rule known as the discipline of the secret."⁹⁹

Christian Morality

Similar reasons explain the form in which the *Didache* sets forth the Christian moral teaching. Some scholars have thought this teaching contained traces of Montanism and Encratism.¹⁰⁰ But an unbiased examination of it reveals nothing more than a stern asceticism, justified by the need of warning Christians against infiltrations from the surrounding paganism. "Thou shalt not commit fornication; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not use magic; thou shalt not use philtres; thou shalt not procure abortion, nor commit infanticide."¹⁰¹ . . . Regard not omens, for this leads to idolatry; neither be an enchanter nor an astrologer nor a magician, neither wish to see these things, for from them all is idolatry engendered."¹⁰² Such commands evoke that whole pagan world where voluptuousness, cruelty, and superstition had almost unbridled sway and met the gaze at every turn.¹⁰³ "Be not one who stretches out his hands to receive, but shuts them

⁹⁹ De Rossi, *Bullettino di archeol. crist.*, 1886, p. 23.

¹⁰⁰ These heresies of the second century will be discussed *infra*.

¹⁰¹ *Didache*, II, 2.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*, III, 4.

¹⁰³ We know how indulgently the most famous philosophers spoke of the loosest morality, and how the most serious Greek philosopher sanctioned the exposing and destruction of infants. (Cf. Aristotle, *Politica*, bk. 4, chap. 16.)

when it comes to giving ¹⁰⁴ . . . for the Father's will is that we give to all from the gifts we have received." ¹⁰⁵ As for the poor, "provide for him according to your understanding, so that no man shall live among you in idleness because he is a Christian."¹⁰⁶ . . . If he has a craft, let him work for his bread.¹⁰⁷ . . . If he will not do so, he is making traffic of Christ; beware of such." ¹⁰⁸ By such firm and prudent words a remedy is pointed out for the ills that afflict this Gentile world, which Christianity is entering for the first time. The helpfulness of labor has never found more earnest advocates than the first Christians.

As we might expect, a statement of Christian morality at that period does not neglect the important question of family duties. "Thou shalt not withhold thine hand from thy son or from thy daughter, but thou shalt teach them the fear of God from their youth up." ¹⁰⁹ Beyond the family circle there is a sort of enlarged family, including the servants. A Christian will be mild toward his servants. "Thou shalt not command in thy bitterness thy slave or thine handmaid . . . lest they cease to fear the God who is over you both; for he comes not to call men with respect of persons, but those whom the Spirit has prepared." ¹¹⁰ A Christian's mildness, inseparable from the spirit of firm justice, will extend to all men. "Thou shalt not desire a schism, but shalt reconcile those that strive. Thou shalt give righteous judgment; thou shalt favor no man's person in reproofing transgression." ¹¹¹ A Christian should go still farther toward those who are his brethren in Jesus Christ. He should hold himself ever ready to place his per-

¹⁰⁴ *Didache*, IV, 5.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, I, 5.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, XII, 4.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, XII, 3.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, XII, 5.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, IV, 9.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, IV, 10.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*, IV, 3.

sonal belongings at their service, for "if you are sharers in the imperishable, how much more in the things which perish?" ¹¹²

Such are the chief precepts of individual and social morality that we find in *The Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles*. A general commandment inspires them and dominates them all: love of God and love of neighbor. It is impressive to see how insistently the author of this little book repeats this commandment and inserts it in the midst of his particular precepts. "First, thou shalt love the God who made thee, secondly, thy neighbor as thyself."¹¹³ . . . Bless those that curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for those that persecute you.¹¹⁴ . . . Thou shalt hate no man.¹¹⁵ Be thou long-suffering and merciful and guileless and quiet and good."¹¹⁶ The most expressive and complete symbol of love is found in the Eucharist. "Concerning the Eucharist, hold Eucharist thus. . . . As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, but was brought together and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom."¹¹⁷ Lastly, this love, which is recommended as the principle of all, is not a vague private sentiment. It does not dispense with obedience to the hierarchical authority and faithfulness to the teaching received by tradition. "My child, thou shalt remember, day and night, him who speaks the word of God to thee, and thou shalt honor him as the Lord."¹¹⁸

¹¹² *Ibidem*, iv, 8. It is sometimes asked whether this passage did not prescribe a real community of possessions. That it did not, seems beyond doubt. A real community of goods was never obligatory, even at Jerusalem, where St. James supposes the existence of rich and poor (3:1-9; 5:1-5). It lasted but a short time, and did not exist elsewhere.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, i, 2.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, i, 3.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, ii, 7.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*, iii, 8.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, ix, 4.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*, iv, 1.

See that no one make thee to err from this way of the teaching, for he teaches thee without God.”¹¹⁹

Dogma

The teaching here spoken of seems to be especially the moral doctrine we have just set forth; but this is closely connected with a dogmatic teaching that is expressly recalled by the *Didache*. This dogmatic teaching is of the simplest and, at first glance, appears to lack originality. But a close examination shows that its originality and interest consist precisely in this, that it takes its phrases almost word for word from the Old and New Testament and gives us a symbol of faith essentially identical with that of the Church today. Men sometimes try to point out a contrast between the “grand gesture” of the Gospel and the “scholastic formulary” of Catholicism; the natural connection between the two is found in the *Didache*. The following is a summary of its dogmatic teaching.

God is in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.¹²⁰ He is the heavenly Father,¹²¹ the Creator,¹²² and almighty. Nothing happens in the world without Him,¹²³ and to Him belongs eternal glory through our Lord Jesus Christ.¹²⁴

Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior,¹²⁵ the Son of God.¹²⁶ He speaks in the Gospel, He is spiritually present in His Church, and He will come again visibly on judgment day.

The Holy Ghost is God with the Father and the Son.¹²⁷ He

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem* VI, 1.

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*, VII, 1.

¹²¹ *Ibidem*, VIII, 2.

¹²² *Ibidem*, I, 2.

¹²³ *Ibidem*, III, 10.

¹²⁴ *Ibidem*, VIII, 2; IX, 4; X, 4.

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*, X, 2.

¹²⁶ *Ibidem*, XVI.

¹²⁷ *Ibidem*, VII, 3.

has spoken by the mouth of the prophets and He prepares man for the divine call.¹²⁸

The Church of God is universal, and every man is called to belong to it.¹²⁹ It has been sanctified by God, freed from all evil, and prepared by the eternal kingdom.¹³⁰

The *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* naturally echoed the great and mysterious expectancy of the kingdom of God, which solaced men after the Savior's death and in which the thought of each one's preparation for death, "which comes like a thief," the prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the last judgment, and the ancient Messianic hopes of the Jewish people, more or less transposed and spiritualized, are mixed together in a way that is sometimes curious.¹³¹ The *Didache* stresses the necessity of watching, of not letting the lamps go out, of having the loins girt, in a word, of being always ready. In this it does but repeat the teaching of Christ. It speaks of the signs that will accompany the *parousia*, or second coming of the Son of God: the increase of false prophets, the darkening of the heavens, the sound of the trumpet, and the resurrection of the dead.¹³² These, too, are merely the recalling of Christ's words.¹³³ Like Christ, it declares, "ye know not the hour in which our Lord cometh."¹³⁴ Like Him, it is concerned with the founding of the Church upon a solid hierarchy. Nowhere in this devout writing do we observe that feverish expectancy of a proximate end of the world, destruc-

¹²⁸ *Ibidem*, IV, 10.

¹²⁹ *Ibidem*, x, 5.

¹³⁰ *Ibidem*, IX, 4; X, 5.

¹³¹ On the formation and characteristics of the eschatological hope in Israel and in Christian times, see Labauche, *Leçons de théologie dogmatique*, II, 347-393, and Lemonnyer, art. "*Fin du monde*," in the *Dict. apol. de la foi catholique*.

¹³² *Didache*, XVI, 1-8.

¹³³ Similar expressions are to be found in the prophets, in their malediction of certain kingdoms whose downfall they predicted. (Cf. Ezech. 32:7 f.; 38:20.)

¹³⁴ *Didache*, XVI, 1.

tive of all authority ¹³⁵ and serving as the principal basis for Christian renunciation, which, we are sometimes told, existed at the beginning of Christianity.¹³⁶ These Christians, whose religion is nourished by the thought of the mysterious *parousia*, are of the number of those whose faith nothing will shake, neither the tragic death of the bishop of Jerusalem nor the destruction of Jerusalem itself.

St. James the Less

This latter event does not concern us now, as it belongs to a later period of history; but the martyrdom of the first bishop of Jerusalem in the year 62 closes the period of the Christian expansion that had its center at Antioch.

About the year 60, the holy Bishop of Jerusalem was occupied with the dangers with which the Christian faith was threatened by the teachings of false doctors claiming connection with Simon Magus and teaching that faith without works sufficed for salvation. He wrote "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad," that is, to all the converted Jews who were at Antioch or elsewhere, in contact with the pagan world, a letter intended to warn them against the danger of these false doctrines. He says: "What shall it profit, my brethren, if any man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him? And if a brother or sister be naked or want daily food, and one of you say to them: 'Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled,' yet give them not those things that are necessary for the body, what shall it profit? So faith also, if it have not works, is dead in itself."¹³⁷

The Christians, dispersed among the pagans, found abominable examples in the pride and corruption and brutality of

¹³⁵ Sabatier, *Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit*, p. 23.

¹³⁶ This is the error maintained by Loisy in *The Gospel and the Church*, and in *Autour d'un petit livre*.

¹³⁷ James 2: 14-26.

the rich toward the poor; some, it seems, yielded to this fatal influence. Their venerable pastor says: "Hearken, my dearest brethren: hath not God chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith? . . . But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you by might? And do they not draw you before the judgment seats?"¹³⁸ Then, in a tone recalling the courageous language of the prophets of old, he says: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl in your miseries, which shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh like fire."¹³⁹

The high priest was still Annas II, son of him who had condemned Christ. Profiting by a vacancy in the governorship—Festus was dead and his successor Albinus had not yet come to Palestine—Annas summoned James and certain other Christians before the Sanhedrin. According to Josephus, they were accused of violating the Law.¹⁴⁰ James was sentenced to be stoned. A passage from Hegesippus' *Ecclesiastical History*, quoted by Eusebius,¹⁴¹ gives us a simple but dramatic account of his martyrdom, wherein, beneath a few apocryphal details, the most exacting critics recognize a basis of historical truth. Notwithstanding every threat, the saintly old man, who, we are told, was ninety-six years old, merely repeated that Christ is truly the Son of the living God. The scribes and Pharisees, furious at this attitude, had him thrown down from the top of the Temple, whither they had urged him to climb that his voice might reach all the people. As the fall did not kill him, they accomplished his death by stoning him. James the Just, repeating his Master's words, said as

¹³⁸ James, 2: 1-9.

¹³⁹ *Ibidem*, 5: 1-6.

¹⁴⁰ *Antiquities*, XX, ix, 1.

¹⁴¹ *H. E.*, II, xxiii.

he was dying: "I beseech Thee, O Lord, God and Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." A fuller ended the bishop's life by crushing his head with the staff he used in preparing his cloth.

The teaching of the martyr bishop now became even more venerable for the Christians, who used to read his Epistle in the churches. At Rome, Ephesus, Corinth, in that Greco-Roman world where the faith was spread by the earnest preaching of the Apostles, the admonitions of James the Less about contempt for riches and the necessity of good works came like a lesson providentially adapted to the condition of the young Christian communities.

CHAPTER IV

The Early Church and the Greco-Roman World (42-70)

WHILE the hierarchical organization, the Christian life, and the symbol of faith were developing at Jerusalem and Antioch and in the Christian communities dependent upon those two centers, the Apostles and the missionaries, under the direction of Peter and Paul, were widening the field of evangelical conquests. Peter, though continuing to watch over the Christian communities of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia Minor, Bithynia, and Mesopotamia, founded the Church of Rome. Paul, after a journey across Asia Minor, also entered Europe and preached the glad tidings at Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth.

Of this new spread of Christianity and of all the expansion which followed, Rome was the center and remained such ever after: the capital of Greco-Roman civilization became the capital of the Christian world.

Paganism

Christianity appeared to the earthly-minded and carnal Jewish world as a scandal; to the haughty and pleasure-loving pagan world it seemed foolish.¹ True, just when Peter was entering Rome, when Paul was addressing the Athenians on the Areopagus, the old pagan religion of Greece and Rome appeared to have received its death-blow. The Empire, under its protective administration, leveled the races it conquered; and at the same time deprived the old offi-

¹ "Unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness."
(1 Cor. 1:23.)

cial cults, which incarnated the soul of the city and the State, of their chief strength. Pagan philosophy was popularized, and thus lost its prestige. Confidence in Plato was weakened no less than faith in Pallas Athene. In the great and woful void produced about men's souls, from the Mediterranean shores to the Black Sea, a kind of religious ferment set in. The phrase "weariness of living" (*taedium vitae*) passed with Ulpian into the stern language of Roman law.²

Unfortunately the place left vacant by the old traditional paganism was already taken. The ancient mystical cults of Hellas rose up again. From Egypt and eastern Asia there came something like an invasion of strange, mysterious, seductive rites. Under Caligula, about A. D. 39, the worship of Isis became naturalized, so to speak, at Rome. After Isis, came Adonis and Aphrodite of Byblus, Elagabal of Emesa, the Baal of Doliche, and the celestial Virgin of Carthage, who drew crowds to their altars. They one and all prepared the way for that great Mithraic worship, that adoration of the sun god (*Sol invictus*), the last to hold out against the religion of Christ. These new cults had a more powerful sway over men's souls than did the ancient national cults. To a people enamored of festivities, they brought the emotions of their rollicking processions and their secret terrors. To souls homesick for the Infinite, they opened their mysteries, they offered a glimpse, in a blessed beyond, of some sort of intimate fusion with an ineffable divinity; all visible forces are merely its infinitely fertile and varied aspects.

We cannot say that the idea of perfection was entirely absent from this effort toward the purification which the new mysteries presupposed or which their followers were expected to acquire.³ But this purification was chiefly external, ritualis-

² Justinian, *Digest*, XXVIII, iii, 6, 7.

³ See Foucart, *Les grands mystères d'Eleusis*, p. 110.

tic; it left the heart untouched.⁴ Some choice souls found in the legendary myths propagated by these religions an occasion for aspiring to a divine world. In reality, however, these myths were "the strangest and most indecent of all paganism."⁵ While the public and secret ceremonies of the new religions, infested with magic and immorality, succeeded in inspiring the popular masses with nothing but the very lowest religious ideas, this great All-Infinite, which lofty minds conceive, yet wherein evil and ugliness have a place as essential as goodness and beauty, suggested to them the notion of a truly moral and supernatural life. In spite of outward similarities, which have been carefully collected and classified in vain,⁶ the soul of that pagan world seemed essentially opposed to the spirit of the Gospel. The latter, therefore, did not hesitate to take its stand, knowingly and openly, as the enemy of all these religions; it ascribed their inspiration to the devil, and did not hide its intention of combating them everywhere, as one combats a mortal foe.

St. Peter at Rome

A certain clever writer has imagined a conversation between the Apostle Peter, reaching Rome poor and ill-clad, and one of those idle Romans looking for news who were often to be met with at that time. The Galilean fisherman declares that he has neither gold nor silver, that he has spent a considerable part of his life fishing on a lake of his native country and mending his nets in order to gain a livelihood;

⁴ See Juvenal, *Satires*, vi, 519-595. Cf. St. Jerome, *Ep. ad Laetam*, 7.

⁵ Boissier, *La Religion romaine d'Auguste aux Antonins*, II, 384.

⁶ On these tactics and claims, see Allo, *L'Évangile en face du syncrétisme païen*. For our exposition, we have borrowed liberally from this work. On the moral and religious condition of the Greco-Roman world, valuable information will be found in J. P. Kirsch, *Kirchengeschichte*, vol. I, Freiburg, 1930, pp. 49 ff.; cf. Döllinger, *The Gentile and the Jew*.

that he now comes to preach a God who was put to death on a cross between two thieves; that he intends to introduce the worship of this God in place of the worship of devils and to spread it over the whole earth. The Roman shrugs his shoulders and goes his way, murmuring: "Poor fool." ⁷ Tacitus' and Suetonius' contemptuous way of speaking about the Christians makes such a dialogue seem not improbable.⁸

Early traditions relate that Peter came to Rome about the year 42, immediately after his miraculous deliverance from prison. These traditions appear likely. A number of very ancient Roman sarcophagi depict the imprisoned Apostle. It may be conjectured that the early Church of Rome wished thereby to represent the relation between St. Peter's imprisonment and his coming to the Eternal City. The Acts of the Apostles says that, after Peter was freed, "he went into another place."⁹ Might not this other place be Rome? ¹⁰ Another argument has been drawn from a passage of Suetonius. The historian is speaking of Emperor Claudius' expulsion of the Jews from Rome; he says this measure was decided upon following a disturbance stirred up among these Jews by a certain Chrestus.¹¹ It would seem that he is confusing the

⁷ Gerbert, *Esquisse de Rome chrétienne*, I, 14-17.

⁸ Tacitus, *Annals*, xv, 44; Suetonius, *Claudius*, 25.

⁹ Acts 12: 17.

¹⁰ Marucchi, *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, I, 11.

¹¹ "Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome." (Suetonius, *Claudius*, 25). The name "Chrestus" was rather common at Rome among slaves and freedmen. To these two reasons we should add the testimony of ecclesiastical writers who, ever since St. Jerome, unanimously assign to St. Peter's pontificate a duration of twenty-five years, which they call "the years of Peter." It is true that some, as for instance the author of the catalogue of the popes (the Philocalian Calendar), place the beginning of these twenty-five years at Christ's Ascension, whereas others, such as pseudo-Ambrose (in his commentary on St. Paul, *P. L.*, XVII, 45), begin the reckoning, not with St. Peter's coming to Rome, but with the foundation of the Roman community, and still others (*e.g.*, Lactantius) declare that "during twenty-five years, and until the beginning of the reign of the Emperor Nero, they [the Apostles] occupied themselves in laying the foundations of the Church in every prov-

founder of Christianity, Christ, whose name is slightly altered, and some important leader whose coming or residence in Rome gave a new impetus to the Christian propaganda. If this is not the Apostle Peter, to which of Christ's Apostles or disciples are we to attribute the honor of being mistaken for the Master? ¹²

Upon reaching Rome, Peter must have been welcomed by more than one brother in the faith. Among the strangers in Jerusalem on Pentecost, baptized by St. Peter, St. Luke mentions inhabitants of Rome.¹³ These converts, after returning home, no doubt related the wonders they had witnessed, and such of their compatriots as made the same Jerusalem pilgrimage in the following years could but confirm what the first converts had said about the new religion. There is every likelihood that some of these latter were also converted and in turn may have converted some Jews of Rome. In any case, in the Jewish quarters of Porta Capena, Campus Martius, Trastevere, and Subura, where the closely united children of Israel plied a variety of trades—cobblers, retailers of everyday articles, or high-class merchants whose fine shops ¹⁴ were frequented by the aristocracy—there must have been talk of the Galilean prophet, His death, His Resurrection, and the strange events that occurred on Pentecost.

ince and city. And while Nero reigned, the Apostle Peter came to Rome." (Lactantius, *Death of the Persecutors*, 2.) "None of these evidences goes back farther than the fourth century. But, since the Philocalian Calendar, insofar as it concerns the list of the popes, depends upon the Chronicle of St. Hippolytus, drawn up at Rome in 235, and as the latter depends upon earlier pontifical lists, we are led to believe that the twenty-five years of St. Peter were already set down in the episcopal lists of Rome toward the end of the second century. It is impossible to go farther back. Thus early and independent testimonies give us the period of twenty-five years and connect it with St. Peter's apostolate; but this accord in the matter of the number of years ceases when we wish to know exactly to what that number applies." Duchesne, *Les Origines chrétiennes*, p. 28.

¹² Allard, *Histoire des persécutions*, I, 15.

¹³ Acts 2:10.

¹⁴ Martial, II, 17; V, 23; VI, 66; IX, 60; X, 87, etc.

It was in one of the poor quarters inhabited by the Jews that the Apostle lodged.¹⁵ Having neither learning nor rank nor high social standing, he was probably not invited to speak in the synagogues, as later on happened to St. Paul, whose title of scribe would bring him this honor. The chief representative of Christ had to win souls one by one through informal conversations, testifying to all that compassion, love of the brotherhood, and indulgent charity accompanied with modesty and humility,¹⁶ which he later recommended to his disciples. His first conquests were made among these poor, lowly people. Therefore, the philosophers of that time looked upon the Christians as "a collection of slaves, common laborers, and old women."¹⁷

Grouped about these Jews at Rome were a multitude of Orientals—Syrians, Egyptians, people of far-off Asia Minor—who were brought together by community of race and traditions. Among all of them the Messianic hope, more or less deformed, was very much alive. Says Suetonius: "There had spread over all the Orient an old and established belief, that it was fated at that time for men coming from Judea to rule the world."¹⁸ Some of these men must have given ear to Peter's words.

In the Roman world itself the poor at least listened with delight to the words of peace, purity, and deliverance addressed to them by the Apostle. In this number were the slaves, those men without rights, without defense or standing, whom the Roman civil law treated as things. We hear, as it were, the echo of the Apostle's voice in this passage of

¹⁵ Probably in one of the lanes where the Jews of Trastevere and Porta Capena lived huddled together. Fouard, *St. Peter and the First Years of Christianity*, p. 344.

¹⁶ See 1 Pet. 3:8.

¹⁷ Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, 33; Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 16; Origen, *Against Celsus*, I, 62.

¹⁸ Suetonius, *Vespasian*, IV; Tacitus, *History*, V, 13.

his letter intended for them: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if for conscience towards God, a man endure sorrows, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it if, committing sin and being buffeted for it, you endure? But if doing well you suffer patiently, this is thankworthy before God. For unto this are you called: Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps. . . . By whose stripes you were healed." ¹⁹ These poor slaves were, in very truth, among those to whom Peter addressed these astonishing words: "You are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people; that you may declare His virtues, who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." ²⁰

Little by little there gathered around the Apostle, besides the poor and the slaves, a number of pagan women of less lowly station. Perhaps they were of the number of those matrons whom the Latin poet shows us coming, athirst for moral purification, to ask in the worship of Isis for numerous ablutions and endless penances, entering the cold waters of the Tiber three times every morning and crawling around the Campus Martius with bleeding knees. ²¹

Christianity gradually ascended from the lower ranks of society to the higher. Tacitus relates that, about the year 43, a matron of the highest social rank, Pomponia Graecina, quit the world after the murder of her friend Julia (daughter of Drusus), who was a victim of Messalina's intrigues. "She lived to a great age and in unintermitted sorrow." ²² Finally her unusual manner of life aroused suspicion. She was ac-

¹⁹ See 1 Pet. 2: 18-24.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, 2: 9.

²¹ Juvenal, VI, 522. Cf. Tibullus, I, 3, 23-32.

²² Tacitus, *Annals*, XIII, 32.

cused of "embracing a foreign superstition" and was consigned to the adjudication of her husband Plautius, a man of consular rank, one of the conquerors of Britain. He adjudged her innocent, and, says the Roman historian, her conduct "during the reign of Claudius escaped with impunity and redounded thereafter to her honor."²³ This passage of Tacitus for a long time led to the supposition that this high-born matron had become a follower of Christ. De Rossi's archeological discoveries in the crypts of Lucina—*e. g.*, the inscription of one Pomponios Grekeinos, probably a nephew of this Pomponia Graecina—led him to surmise that the cemetery known as that of Lucina, one of the most ancient of Christian Rome, was the property of Pomponia Graecina herself.²⁴ The great Roman lady, as wretched in her luxurious surroundings as the slaves in their chains, sought peace in the doctrine preached by the Galilean fisherman.

Conversions of this sort were, however, very rare in the first half of the first century. About the year 51, when the Emperor Claudius, because of a Roman tumult for which a certain Chrestus was held to blame, "commanded all Jews to depart from Rome," as we learn from St. Luke,²⁵ the Christian community must have been very largely composed of poor Jews. This was not the first time that the civil power dispersed the Roman Jewry. As on previous occasions, the banishment of the Jews did not last long. When the tumult quieted down, they were allowed to return little by little.²⁶ In a few years, perhaps in a few months, the Roman Jewry was reestablished, and Christianity resumed its continuous spread at Rome.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ De Rossi, *Roma sotterranea*, I, 306-315; Northecote, *Roma Sotteranea*, I, 124, and Allard, *Histoire des persécutions*, I, 24-27. Cf. Marucchi, *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, p. 13.

²⁵ Acts 18: 2.

²⁶ Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, I, 18-22.

St. Paul in Europe

Peter must have left the city with his flock of Christians. He did not return until about the end of 63. But, while the head of the Apostles was again preaching the gospel in the East, Paul entered Europe.

About the year 51, while the Apostle of the Gentiles was hesitating at Troas as to what direction he should take, in a dream he saw a Macedonian standing near him and saying to him: "Pass over into Macedonia and help us." The Apostle understood that God was commanding him to turn toward Europe. He decided to cross the sea, accompanied by one who appears for the first time in the narrative and who becomes the annalist of the new Apostolic campaign. It is Luke, a Gentile, a native of Antioch, a physician, a man of intellectual culture, as his writing shows. "With the advent of Luke, somewhat of the Grecian genius found its way into Paul's mind and works. It had gifts to offer him which were unknown in the East, though they were to be found in abundance along these lovely coasts whither the apostles were steering their course—gifts of harmony, the beauty of sweetness and light."²⁷

The Apostolic group landed successively at Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth. In all these cities, proud of their great historic memories, but inhabited by people thirsting for religious truth, the missionaries' words were listened to eagerly. Wonderful conversions took place in all classes. At Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth, Christian communities were organized. Supernatural gifts—prophecy and the gift of tongues—were manifested in extraordinary abundance. The "Lord's Supper," or the Eucharist, as at Jerusalem and Antioch, there became the central act of worship. In the evening, after sunset, by the light of many lamps,²⁸

²⁷ Fouard, *St. Paul and his Missions*, p. 106.

²⁸ Acts 20: 8.

the Christians met together in a room which usually occupied the uppermost floor of the house. As in the Jewish environment, the liturgy began with a supper which was called the meal of charity, or agape.

The Greeks, especially the Corinthians, unfortunately introduced a practice of Greek societies, that each member should eat at the society's meal what he himself had brought. Hence there arose regrettable abuses, against which St. Paul had to protest forcefully.²⁹ These abuses hastened the separation of the Eucharist from the agape, which then gradually disappeared from Christian public worship. At the close of the fraternal supper, those who had partaken of it greeted one another with a holy kiss of peace and charity.³⁰ The meeting-place was no longer, as it had been before, the synagogue, but the home of one of the brethren. "Here they found the true Ark of God, with the indwelling Eucharistic presence; here, too, there was a High Tribunal where every difference was speedily adjusted;³¹ in fine, God's house was a center of social life so beneficent and delightful that to be excommunicated from its pale seemed the most dreadful of all punishments."³² Words of thanksgiving were on the lips of all. There was a charm of virtue, a serenity of unexcelled joy. Such brotherhood merited the praise of the pagans, who exclaimed: "See how they love one another."³³

Athens alone almost completely resisted the Apostle's preaching and the grace of God. After it had lost its independence, and Greece, which became a Roman province in 146 under the name of Achaia, had Corinth for its capital, Athens was nothing more than a city of schools, as Cambridge and Oxford are today. The only people to be seen there were pro-

²⁹ See 1 Cor. 11: 17 f.

³⁰ See 1 Cor. 16: 20; 1 Pet. 5: 14.

³¹ See 1 Cor. 6: 1-7.

³² See 1 Thess. 5: 12-21. Fouard, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

³³ Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, xxxix.

fessors, philosophers, and orators, who spent their time instructing youth.

As in Demosthenes' time, the most frequented place in the city was the Agora. The two philosophies then most in vogue were Epicureanism and Stoicism; their spokesmen were accustomed to meet in the Agora for the discussion of moral questions. Paul makes his appearance there and, from the first words of his address, raises his hearers' thoughts to the idea of the Divinity and His greatness, of the worship that man owes to Him. The serious, touching, confident words of this stranger aroused curiosity, but stirred diverse impressions in his hearers' minds. The followers of Epicurus, observing that the speech was about religious questions, murmured: "What is it that this word sower would say?" The disciples of the Porch, less contemptuous, thought that a new god was being set forth. Finally, curiosity got the better of scoffing skepticism.

That the stranger's doctrine might be heard the better, he was invited to go up to the Areopagus, far from the noise of the Agora. There, in the presence of Hellenism's greatest art and her finest memories of the past, Paul delivered that justly admired address which is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

"Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious. For, passing by and seeing your idols, I found an altar also, on which was written: 'To the unknown God.' What therefore you worship, without knowing it, that I preach to you: God, who made the world and all things therein; He being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is He served with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing it is He who giveth to all life and breath and all things; and hath made of one, all mankind, to dwell upon the whole face of the earth, determining appointed times and the limits of their habitation. That they should seek God, if happily they may feel after Him

or find Him, although He be not far from every one of us; for in Him we live and move and are; as some also of your own poets said: 'for we are also his offspring.' Being therefore the offspring of God, we must not suppose the divinity to be like unto gold or silver or stone, the graving of art and device of man. And God indeed having winked at the times of this ignorance, now declaring unto men that all should everywhere do penance. Because He hath appointed a day wherein He will judge the world in equity, by the Man whom He hath appointed; giving faith to all, by raising Him up from the dead."³⁴

This mention of Christ's Resurrection, of a miracle so foreign to Greek minds, put an end to the interest and surprise with which at first they listened to the Apostle's words. He was unceremoniously interrupted. The Epicureans and Stoics returned to their speculations about pure morality. Yet a few hearers were moved; such was Dionysius, a member of the celebrated Areopagus—the Church of Paris honors him as its founder—and also a lady of rank, named Damaris.

Nevertheless a step had been taken in the Greek world. The great Apostle, who could be a Jew with the Jews, now makes himself more and more a Greek with the Greeks, to win all to Christ.³⁵ This "Hebrew of the Hebrews . . . a Pharisee, the son of Pharisees,"³⁶ readily takes his comparisons from the military and civil life of the citizens of the Empire,³⁷ adorns his preaching with verses of Aratus, Menander, and Epimenides, and declares his sincere admiration for the Roman peace and the imperial order. Not that he now put his ideal in a new setting. His thought, passing beyond the confines of the Empire, as beyond those of the Jewish world, was limited only by the bounds of that humanity for which his Master had

³⁴ Acts 17: 22-31.

³⁵ See 1 Cor. 9: 21.

³⁶ Phil. 3: 5; Acts 23: 6.

³⁷ Prat, *La Théologie de saint Paul*, I, 20.

died on the cross. And as he said, in words that seem to have burst forth in flames from his glowing soul, his heart opened to "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame."³⁸

Epistle to the Romans

It is not certain that Paul went as far as Rome on his first missionary journey in Europe. But it is beyond doubt that, from the time Claudius began his persecution, Paul was ceaselessly in relation with Rome, whether by voice or by writing. In 58, while staying at Corinth, he thought the time had come to send to the Christians of Rome, in the form of a letter, the great doctrinal exposition now known as the Epistle to the Romans.

The mere enumeration of the twenty-four persons whom the Apostle greets at the close of this letter is like a roll call of the Christian community of Rome, as it was in the middle of the first century. We see that, at this period, several members of the Roman Church are known to the Apostle, at least by name, and that he counts many friends among them. We also observe that, from the time of Claudius' decree, the Christian community, which at first was recruited on the spot in the Jewries and among a few strangers, chance arrivals from the Orient, has now made a daring opening in the most aristocratic families of the Empire. Besides Jewish-born Christians, such as Prisca and Aquila or people in the household of Aristobulus (grandson of Herod), we meet such of the Roman race, as Urbanus, Ampliatus, Rufus, and Julia, not to speak of those of Narcissus' household, and genuine Greeks, such as Phlegon, Hermes, Epenetus, Philologus, and Nereus.³⁹

We have no indication that, in a gathering made up of such

³⁸ Phil. 4: 8.

³⁹ Rom. chap. 16.

diverse elements, painful clashes occurred. Pagans and Jews, rich and poor, fraternized in the love of Christ. It is none the less true that, from the contact of the Jewish with the Hellenic or Roman element, misunderstandings may have arisen. Greeks and Romans were proud of their material civilization with its untold wonders and an intellectual culture which they highly esteemed. Naturally they were inclined to look down upon this insignificant Jewish race, whose ceremonies seemed so odd and whose mission, in any case, appeared to be ended. On the other hand, the Jews were no less proud of their ancient law, which they had from God Himself, and of the promises given to their father Abraham. They were reluctant to see themselves placed on the same footing as the Gentiles with regard to salvation.

Paul had an idea, very dear to him, which he called his gospel, because he was convinced that God had given him the mission of spreading it and furthering its success. This idea was that paganism without the law and Judaism with the law had given proof of their impotence, and that both must give way to a higher form of religion; "so that the religion of Christ, taking the place of the law of Israel and the error of the Gentiles, would gather in the net of the Church both Jew and Gentile together."⁴⁰ This is the whole teaching of the Epistle to the Romans, "the most important and the most vigorous of Paul's epistles, the one we may regard as the summary of his theology."⁴¹

The Apostle says: "There is no respect of persons with God. For whosoever have sinned without the law, shall perish without the law; and whosoever have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law. . . . But now without the law the justice of God is made manifest, being witnessed by the law and the prophets. Even the justice of God, by faith of Jesus Christ.

⁴⁰ Le Camus, *L'Œuvre des apôtres*, III, 314.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 315.

. . . There is no distinction [between Jew and Gentile]: for all have sinned, and do need the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”⁴² In this thought of redemption by the blood of Christ, Paul wishes to reconcile Jews and Gentiles by love; at this thought his heart is thrilled, and from his soul come forth those accents, perhaps the most vehement that have ever come from a human soul: “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who is against us? He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also, with Him, given us all things? . . . Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or famine or nakedness or danger or persecution or the sword? . . . I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things to come nor might nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”⁴³

In the last chapters of his epistle, St. Paul deduces certain practical conclusions which are worth noting in order to see the attitude of the Church at Rome toward the Empire. Since henceforth Jews and Gentiles are fused into a single society open to all, the time has come for the Jew to abjure every thought of revolt. St. Paul speaks particularly to those Israelites whose seething nationalism would not consent to fusion in the great Roman unity: “Let every soul be subject to higher powers. . . . He that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. . . . The prince is God’s minister. Wherefore be subject of necessity, not only for wrath, but also for conscience’ sake.”⁴⁴

When the Apostle wrote these lines, Seneca and Burrus

⁴² Rom. 2: 11 f.; 3: 21-24.

⁴³ Rom. 8: 31-39.

⁴⁴ Rom. 13: 1-5.

were governing the Empire in Nero's name, and the latter had not yet given his people any reason for cursing him. But the accidental circumstances of the government at the time when the Epistle to the Romans was written are of little moment. St. Paul was proclaiming a principle that the Church was to repeat after him with the same energy, namely, that a Christian should be second to none in obedience to the just laws of his country and in respect for its magistrates. This commandment would but make more striking her uncompromising attitude when the higher rights of God and of justice were at stake. The young Roman Church and St. Paul himself were soon to give a brilliant example of this heroic resistance.

St. Paul at Rome

Four years after writing his Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul entered Rome as a prisoner. He had been set upon in a tumult in Jerusalem, whither he had brought the offerings collected in Achaia for the brethren of Jerusalem, and had been arrested by the Roman police and haled before the governor of Judea. Before the tribune Claudius, he demanded his rights as a Roman citizen and uttered the solemn formula of appeal to Caesar. After an imprisonment at Caesarea, he was brought to Rome, reaching there in March, 62, just when Nero's personal reign was beginning. Burrus had just died and was replaced by the infamous Tigellinus, the companion of the Emperor's debauchery; Seneca had retired from public life, and, as has been said, "Nero now had only the Furies for his advisers."

But the ruler no doubt paid little attention to this Jewish prisoner and to the religious quarrel in which he was said to be involved. Paul had to wait two years for that appearance before the Emperor which he had demanded as the right of a Roman citizen. During those two years he lived in a condition

of mitigated imprisonment in the custody of a pretorian, freely receiving those who came to visit him. The Christian community at Rome had grown. One of the letters written by the Apostle during his imprisonment speaks of Christians belonging to Caesar's household.⁴⁵ It would seem that his words brought about many conversions, even among the soldiers. In the same letter he says that his chains have become a preaching of Christ in the whole pretorian camp near which he was lodged.⁴⁶ There it was that he wrote several of his Epistles: probably the short note to Philemon, the letter to the Churches of Asia Minor known as the Epistle to the Ephesians, the exhortation to the brethren at Colossa, and certainly the letter to the Philippians.⁴⁷

These so-called Epistles of the Captivity are distinguished from the others by a tone of greater tenderness and a deeper mystical doctrine. The Apostle's first letters were merely an echo of his missionary preaching; the Epistle to the Romans condensed his fundamental dogmatic teaching. In his correspondence with the Churches of Asia in general, with the Christians of Colossa and of Philippi, his soul is poured forth in more touching accents. At the close of his letter to the Philippians he writes these exquisitely delicate lines: "I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow laborer and fellow soldier. . . . He was sick nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him; and not only on him, but on me also."⁴⁸ To Philemon he writes: "As Paul an old man, and now a prisoner also of Jesus Christ, I beseech thee for my son, whom I have begotten in my bands."⁴⁹ In these Epistles

⁴⁵ Phil. 4: 22.

⁴⁶ Phil. 1: 13.

⁴⁷ Each of these letters alludes to an imprisonment of the Apostle. The Epistle to the Philippians certainly dates from the Roman imprisonment. It is possible that the other Epistles were written by St. Paul while he was in prison at Caesarea. Cf. Jacquier, *Histoire des livres du Nouveau Testament*, IV, 282.

⁴⁸ Phil. 2: 25-27.

⁴⁹ Philemon 9 f.

of the Captivity are to be found lofty and enlightening views upon the interior life, upon Christ considered as the foundation of all things, upon the abasement of the Son of God, upon the struggle we have to engage in against the infernal powers, upon the old man and the new man, upon the union of Christ and His Church.

There is nothing equal to the touching words with which the Apostle, on his knees, begs the Christians to strengthen the inner man within themselves: "I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, for you Gentiles, bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . that he would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened by His Spirit with might unto the inward man, that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts; that, being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able . . . to know also the charity of Christ."⁵⁰ For Christ is the foundation of all: "God, according to His good pleasure, hath purposed in Him . . . to reestablish all things in Christ, that are in heaven and on earth."⁵¹ And it is this Christ who, out of love for us, so greatly humbled Himself. "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant. . . . He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross."⁵² But alas, although on one hand Christ draws us, on the other the powers of evil seek to seduce us. "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places."⁵³ Of what, at bottom, does the whole Christian life consist? "To put off, according to former conversation, the old man, who is corrupted according to the desire of error, and

⁵⁰ Ephes. 3: 1, 14-19.

⁵¹ Ephes. 1: 9 f.

⁵² Phil. 2: 6-8. Cf. Durand, "*La Divinité de Jésus-Christ dans saint Paul*," in the *Revue biblique*, 1903, pp. 550 ff.

⁵³ Ephes. 6: 12.

be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth.”⁵⁴

Paul’s words are no less tender when he speaks of the Church than when he speaks of Christ and of God; for him, Christ is the living God, and the Church and Christ are one. The Church is the body of Christ; it is Christ continuing to live, through time and space, by His ministers and His Sacraments. If God, in His Church, has bestowed diverse ministries and graces, all this was done “for the edifying of the body of Christ, until we all meet into the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ, that . . . doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in Him who is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in charity.”⁵⁵

St. Peter Again at Rome

St. Paul’s trial was finally ended. In 63 he appeared, if not before the Emperor, at least before the council having jurisdiction in the case of his appeal.⁵⁶ The imperial tribunal, unconcerned with religious disputes, provided these did not disturb public tranquillity, may have regarded Paul’s case as a mere conflict of Jewish sects, and acquitted the Apostle, who, as he himself expresses it, “was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.”⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Ephes. 4: 22–24.

⁵⁵ Ephes. 4: 11–16. We have purposely given as literal a translation as possible of this sentence, in which the most personal, the most grammatically involved, the densest and the most powerful traits of St. Paul’s style are revealed.

⁵⁶ Willems, *Le Droit public romain*, p. 475.

⁵⁷ 2 Tim. 4: 17.

When Paul was set at liberty, he probably went to Spain; the Christian beginnings of that country seem to be connected with his apostolate. He also revisited the Christian communities of the Aegean sea-coast. The so-called pastoral letters, written to Titus and to Timothy, give us a few details of this journey.

St. Paul's stay at Rome, though he was a prisoner, had been of advantage to the progress of the Church. The Christians, comforted by his presence and example, showed themselves more confident and courageous.

At the very time when Paul left the Eternal City, Peter reached there. There can be no doubt of this second journey of the chief of the Apostles to Rome. But the fact of Peter's residence at Rome has borne such consequences and aroused so great controversies, that it is worth while considering the evidence for it. "After the middle of the second century a precise and universal tradition clearly existed as to St. Peter's visit to Rome. . . . It is very remarkable that a position entailing consequences of such crucial importance never was questioned in any of the controversies between the East and Rome. . . . But the evidence goes back farther than the end or even the middle of the second century. In his letter to the Romans,⁵⁸ St. Ignatius of Antioch alludes to their Apostolic traditions. . . . Without speaking of the allusions to it which it has been thought possible to trace in the Apocalypse and the Epistle to the Hebrews, the last chapter of the Fourth Gospel contains an extremely clear allusion to the way in which St. Peter met his death.⁵⁹ . . . St. Clement, in the celebrated passage on Nero's persecution,⁶⁰ connects the Apostles Peter and Paul with the Danaides, the Dirces, and other victims who suffered as a result of the burning of Rome. . . . There is no one,

⁵⁸ St. Ignatius, *Romans*, 4.

⁵⁹ John 21: 18 f.

⁶⁰ *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 5 f.

even including St. Peter himself, but records his sojourn in Rome. His letter to the Christians in Asia Minor finishes with a greeting which he sends them in the name of the Church of Babylon, that is, the Church of Rome.”⁶¹

Though the reality of St. Peter’s residence in Rome is historically established, we have only vague data about his labors there. “In Trastevere, in the ghetto, on the Aventine, at St. Prisca; on the Viminal, at the spot marked by St. Pudentiana; on the Via Nomentana, at the Ostrian cemetery, at the place called *Ad nymphas sancti Petri*, or *Ubi Petrus baptizabat*; in the Vatican region, where he shed his blood: at these spots a few traditional souvenirs enable us vaguely to follow the Apostle by the half-effaced traces of his footsteps.”⁶²

The Burning of Rome

More exact historical documents are preserved regarding the terrible persecution which troubled the end of St. Peter’s Roman pontificate.

On July 19, A. D. 64, a fire started in the shops surrounding the Circus Maximus and, fanned by a strong wind, destroyed, one after the other, the sections of the Palatine, the Forum, the Caelian hill, the Aventine, and the Esquiline. This conflagration lasted six days. More than half of old Rome was burned. The people for the most part were able to save their lives by fleeing to the Campus Martius, where they had temporary shelter; but they saw themselves reduced to utter destitution by this disaster. As usually happens in such cases, they at once

⁶¹ Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 45; cf. Fouard, *St. Peter*, pp. 407 f.; Guiraud, *Questions d’histoire et d’archéologie chrétienne, la venue de saint Pierre à Rome*; De Smedt, *Dissertationes selectae in primam aetatem Ecclesiae*, pp. 12–22; Grisar, *History of Rome and the Popes in the Middle Ages*, I, 284 ff. Guignebert, in a voluminous work, *La Primauté de Pierre et la venue de Pierre à Rome*, attempts to reopen the question and to revise the claims of the Christian tradition to historical certitude.

⁶² Gondal, *Au temps des apôtres*, p. 239.

asked who was the person responsible for the calamity. On every tongue was one name—that of the Emperor.⁶³

Not long before, Nero had revealed his cruel, vain, and whimsical nature. Three years earlier, to avenge the murder of Pedanius Secundus, prefect of Rome, he had ordered the victim's four hundred slaves put to death. Popular indignation expressed itself by an uprising, which the police had difficulty in curbing.⁶⁴ Since then the tyrant's crimes had increased. Burrus was dead, and public opinion accused Nero of putting him out of the way. Octavia, overwhelmed with shame, had likewise disappeared. Seneca, in retirement, was hourly expecting a decree of death or torture. The terrible Tigellinus ruled. The Emperor, elated by the base flattery of his courtiers, curiously mingled his bloody cruelties with visions of literary glory and, it was said, lulled his remorse (if the monster was capable of that feeling) by reciting poetry. Word spread that some one had seen Nero, in actor's costume, contemplating the conflagration from the top of a tower, while he sang the destruction of Troy.

The Neronian Persecution

An idea, possibly suggested by one of the many Jews at court,⁶⁵ entered the despot's mind. To accuse the Christians of

⁶³ Tacitus, *Annals*, xv, 44; cf. *Annals*, xv, 67; Suetonius, *Nero*, 38; Pliny, *Natural History*, xvii, 1.

⁶⁴ Tacitus, *Annals*, xiv, 42 ff.

⁶⁵ St. Clement of Rome, alluding to the slaughter of Christians by Nero's orders, attributes it to jealousy (*First Epistle*, 5). Moreover, we know that Nero was surrounded by Jews (Josephus, *Antiquities*, XVIII, XIX, XX). It is noteworthy that the Jews, ordinarily confused with the Christians in the legal measures of this period (Tacitus, *Annals*, xv, 44; *History*, v, 5), were clearly distinguished from them in Nero's persecutions. Carlo Pascal (*L'Incendio di Roma e i primi cristiani*) and Bouché-Leclercq (*L'Intolérance religieuse et la politique*) blame the burning of Rome upon the fanaticism of a few Christians, whose criminal exaltation was made use of by Nero and his court for the accomplishment of a hateful scheme. Di Crescenzo in his reply (*Un difensore di Nerone*) and Semeria (*Il primo sangue cristiano*) have little difficulty in refuting this thesis, so contradic-

the outrage would deflect the unpleasant gossip from his own person and at the same time give occasion for those mass executions which his notion of beauty transformed into horrible festivity. But the investigation which was begun soon brought to light the existence of a "vast multitude" ⁶⁶ of Christians. To hold them all responsible for the fire would be too open a defiance of likelihood. A pretext was at hand for condemning them *en masse*: were they not, as a whole, "enemies of mankind," that is, of Roman civilization? Tacitus says they "were convicted, not so much on the charge of burning the city, as of hating the human race." ⁶⁷ This same historian continues: "In their deaths they were also made the subjects of sport, for they were covered with the hides of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs or nailed to crosses or set fire to and, when day declined, burned to serve for nocturnal lights. Nero offered his own gardens for that spectacle and exhibited a Circensian game, indiscriminately mingling with the common people in the habit of a charioteer." ⁶⁸

A passage in St. Clement's *Epistle to the Corinthians* adds a few details to Tacitus' account. It seems that Nero, whose

tory to the texts of Suetonius, Pliny, Tacitus, and Dio. Renan and Havet hardly ventured to insinuate a similar accusation. Renan, *The Anti-Christ*, chap. 13; Havet, *Le Christianisme et ses origines*, IV, 228.

⁶⁶ "*Multitudo ingens*" (Tacitus, *Annals*, xv, 44).

⁶⁷ "*Haud perinde in crimine incendii quam odio generis humani convicti sunt*" (Tacitus, *loc. cit.*). Tertullian attributes to Nero a decree which may be summed up in these words: "*Christiani non sint*, Let there be no Christians." Tertullian (*Apol.*, 5; *To the Nations*, I, 7) calls this decree "*institutum neronianum*." The word *institutum* in Roman law does not necessarily mean "edict" or "decree." In itself, Tertullian's expression might signify only that Nero inaugurated the period of cruelty against the Christians (Cezard, *Histoire juridique des persécutions*, p. 18); but a comparison of this text with that of Sulpicius Severus (II, 41) and the early Christian writers' general way of speaking, leads us to suppose that Tertullian had in mind a special undertaking by Nero against the Christians as such.

⁶⁸ Tacitus, *loc. cit.* According to the old Roman law, the punishment for the crime of arson was death by fire or in the games of the circus. See the law of the Twelve Tables; Gaius, in the *Digest*, XLVII, ix, 9; Callistratus, in the *Digest*, XLVIII, xix, 28; Paul, *Sent.*, v, 20. Cf. Cezard, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

depraved taste set all decency at nought, had introduced the custom of making those condemned to death impersonate certain characters of mythology. The people would be treated to the sight of Hercules painfully tearing from his body a burning garment made of pitch, or of Orpheus torn to pieces by a bear, or of Daedalus tumbling from the sky. Christian women were forced to impersonate the Danaides or Dirce. In the former case, before dying, they had to go through a series of tortures which we can only surmise; in the latter case they were fastened to the horns of wild bulls and dragged about the amphitheater.⁶⁹ These horrible executions were the signal for a persecution that extended into the provinces and lasted at Rome until Nero's death in 68.⁷⁰

The most illustrious victims of this persecution were the Apostles Peter and Paul. Tradition fixes the year of their martyrdom as 67. In the first and second centuries, St. John, St. Clement of Rome, and St. Dionysius of Corinth speak of St. Peter's martyrdom without mentioning the manner of it; but in the next century, Origen says that the head of the Roman Church was crucified head downwards.⁷¹ Thus was fulfilled a prophecy spoken by the Savior, when He said to Peter: "Thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldst not."⁷² St. Paul was beheaded. This was the form of execution reserved for Roman citizens.⁷³

⁶⁹ Clement, *First Epistle*, 6. A Pompeian text and fresco seem to prove that this last named punishment was often inflicted on women who had been condemned to death.

⁷⁰ See the reasons advanced by Tillemont, Ruinart, and De Rossi. They may be found in Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, I, 58-76.

⁷¹ In Eusebius, III, i. This form of capital punishment was not unprecedented. See Seneca, *Consolation to Marcia*, 20.

⁷² "This He said, signifying by what death he [Peter] should glorify God." (John 21: 18 f.)

⁷³ A tradition, recorded by St. Jerome, places St. Paul's martyrdom on the same day as that of St. Peter. Another tradition, represented by St. Augustine, places a year's interval between the two deaths. Dionysius of Corinth, Tertullian, and

The Destruction of Jerusalem

It may be that the Jews were the first to give Nero the idea of persecuting the Christians. It was not long before they, in turn, experienced a most humiliating defeat by a Roman emperor, which ended with the burning of their Temple and the destruction of their Holy City.

About the year 62, shortly after the martyrdom of St. James the Less, a rude peasant, Jesus, the son of Ananias, began running through the streets of Jerusalem, uttering terrible curses upon the city and the Temple. "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds," he cried out; "a voice against Jerusalem and the sanctuary . . . a voice against all the people." He kept repeating these threats until, during the siege of the city seven years later (A. D. 70), he was struck in the forehead by a stone and died.⁷⁴ Jerusalem was in an unexampled state of excitement. A horrible massacre of three thousand Jews (A. D. 66), ordered by the Roman procurator Gessius Florus, stirred up a general revolt of the city's population against the Roman authority. One of Nero's last acts, in 68, was to send Vespasian to Palestine with instructions to subdue the rebels at all costs. The general was already before the walls of Jerusalem when the acclaim of the Syrian legions brought him to the imperial office, left vacant by the successive deaths of four emperors (Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius), all of whom died within eighteen months. The task of carrying on the war he left to his son Titus. The siege, one of the most sanguinary recorded by history, lasted seven months and ended by Titus gaining possession of Jerusalem. The Temple was destroyed. The survivors of the siege were

the priest Caius merely associate the two Apostles in their martyrdom. (See Eusebius, II, xxv.) The most reliable tradition places St. Peter's martyrdom on the Vatican hill; the tradition placing it on the Janiculum did not arise until the Middle Ages. (See Marucchi, *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, I, 11.)

⁷⁴ Josephus, *Jewish War*, VI, v, 3.

made prisoners or sold as slaves. The veil of the Holy of Holies, the seven-branched candlestick, the Book of the Law and the Table of the Loaves of Proposition were carried off as trophies to Rome. This was "the abomination of desolation" foretold by the prophets. This was the fulfilment of the Savior's prophecy: "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee . . . and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee. And they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone; because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation."⁷⁵

The destruction of the Temple had a considerable influence upon the destinies of the Christian Church. Thenceforth the observance of the Mosaic ceremonies became impossible in its most essential elements. The priesthood of Aaron, the perpetual sacrifice, and the secondary ceremonies dependent on them were now antiquated and ceased. The Christians had not witnessed the final fall of the Holy City. Seeing the Roman standards raised around Jerusalem, they remembered the Master's warning: "When therefore you shall see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet . . . then they that are in Judea, let them flee to the mountains."⁷⁶ They withdrew to the city of Pella in Perea, near the left bank of the Jordan. There they lived, poor indeed, on their savings, full of confidence in the immortal vitality of their Church. But when Jerusalem fell, "that terrible fall inspired them with a grief like that which a devoted child feels at the death of an unnatural mother. Even toward the Synagogue, deicide and persecutor though it was, a sort of filial reverence existed among

⁷⁵ Luke 19: 42-44.

⁷⁶ Matt. 24: 15 f. The best interpreters explain the "abomination of desolation" as meaning the Roman military ensigns, which Tacitus (*Annals*, II, 17) calls "the tutelar deities of the legions."

these Christians.”⁷⁷ Thirty years later, the author of the Epistle attributed to St. Barnabas⁷⁸ tried to console the Jews who bemoaned the loss of Sion and the end of their ancient observances, by showing them that the holocausts of the Old Law merely prefigured a sacrifice that is performed and will ever be performed, and that all the ceremonies of Judaism had a hidden meaning which, on being revealed, abrogated them. “The horror for unclean food survived in the aversion to be practiced with regard to wicked men; ⁷⁹ the brazen serpent and Moses’ extended arms were honored in the image of Christ, of whom they were figures.⁸⁰ The Jews, as also the Gentiles, had placed their hopes in a material temple.”⁸¹ The Temple had now been destroyed by their enemies; but those enemies were to take upon themselves to build to God His true temple, a spiritual edifice.⁸²

Christianity at Rome

The providential connection between the Christian Church and its Jewish beginnings was not broken; but the Christian communities became more and more detached from the traditions of the Synagogue, in their hierarchy and also in their ceremonies, and even in the form of their doctrinal teaching.

St. Paul’s three pastoral Epistles, written during his last days,⁸³ are, as it were, the Apostle’s last will and testament. In a few clearly indicated details, they give us the picture of the hierarchical organization of the Church at that period.

At the head is the bishop. He is the “steward of God,”⁸⁴

⁷⁷ Champagny, *Rome et la Judée*, II, 312.

⁷⁸ Funk and Bardenhewer judge that the Epistle of Barnabas was written sometime between 96 and 98.

⁷⁹ *Epistle of Barnabas*, 10.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, 12.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, 16.

⁸² *Ibidem*.

⁸³ Cf. Prat, *La Théologie de saint Paul*, I, 465-469.

⁸⁴ Θεοῦ οἰκονομος. (Tit. 1:7.)

says St. Paul. He should, therefore, be a model of perfection among the faithful: sober, chaste, kindly, amiable, just, without conceit, hospitable, so that even those outside may bear him a good testimony.⁸⁵

Deacons should be men of tried virtue: upright, incapable of double-dealing, not self-seeking, keeping the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.⁸⁶ For duties so difficult, a trial is necessary. They are to be ordained only after a preliminary probation, a sort of novitiate.⁸⁷

At that time devout widows had a special part in the activities of the Church. To them was entrusted the direction of certain works. To these duties were to be admitted only women at least sixty years old, who had been only once married, and who were commendable for their good works, for the way they brought up their children, for their zeal in the exercise of hospitality, in the washing of the feet of the saints.⁸⁸

As for simple Christians, all their duties are summed up in the Apostle's single advice, that they be faithful to the obligations of their condition and state. Each Christian is a member of the great social body of the Church. Let each one conscientiously perform the duties imposed on him by the place he occupies. Let the old men take care to remain "sound in faith, in love, in patience."⁸⁹ Let the aged women avoid evil-speaking and see that their outward conduct is such as becomes holiness.⁹⁰ Let the young women love their husbands and their children, and remain chaste, circumspect, busied with their

⁸⁵ See 1 Tim. 3: 1-7. The Epistle speaks of the deacons in the plural, but of the *episkopos* in the singular. The words *episkopos* and *presbyteros* are always used without distinction; but this verbal confusion should not mislead us as to the real distinction between the office of bishop and that of priest.

⁸⁶ See 1 Tim. 3: 8 f.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, 3: 10.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, 5: 9 f.

⁸⁹ Titus 2: 2.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, 2: 3.

home duties, submissive to their husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.⁹¹ Let servants obey their masters; in all things let them show a perfect docility, that in all things they may honor the doctrine of God, our Savior.⁹²

But this enumeration of duties does not give what is, according to the Apostle, the very soul of the Christian life. This is piety—earnest, faithful piety, devoted above all to the faith received from Christ by the tradition of the Apostles and ancients. The bishop must exercise himself in piety, since piety is profitable to all things.⁹³ The widows should continue in supplications and prayers night and day.⁹⁴ This piety must not stray off in private fancies. As there is a hierarchical center of the Church, so there is a “deposit of faith.” “O Timothy,” the Apostle writes, “keep that which is committed to thy trust,”⁹⁵ “keep the good thing committed to thy trust.”⁹⁶ “Continue thou in those things which thou hast learned, and which have been committed to thee: knowing of whom thou hast learned them.”⁹⁷ . . . The things which thou hast heard of me by many witnesses, the same commend to faithful men, who shall be fit to teach others also.”⁹⁸ Paul denounces evil teachers, “disobedient, vain talkers,” “teaching things which they ought not.”⁹⁹ The Church casts forth teachers who betray the salutary doctrine;¹⁰⁰ for the Church, “the house of God,” is “the pillar and ground of the truth.”¹⁰¹

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, 2: 4 f.

⁹² *Ibidem*, 2: 9 f.

⁹³ See 1 Tim. 4: 8.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, 5: 5.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, 6: 20.

⁹⁶ 2 Tim. 1: 14.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, 3: 14.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, 2: 2.

⁹⁹ Titus 1: 10 f.

¹⁰⁰ See 2 Tim. 4: 3.

¹⁰¹ See 1 Tim. 3: 15.

The Synoptic Gospels

When St. Paul gave these solid and precise admonitions, the Christians had long known where to find that "deposit of faith" of which he spoke. They had first sought it and found it in the preaching of the "witnesses of Christ," of those who had received instruction from His immediate hearers. The venerable Papias, "the hearer of John, who was a companion of Polycarp and one of the ancients," mentioned by St. Irenaeus,¹⁰² declared that his whole care had ever been to inquire "into the words of the presbyters, what Andrew or Peter or Thomas or James or John or Matthew or any other of the Lord's disciples, had said." And we are struck by Papias' expression of the rule of faith in that early day; he says: "For I did not suppose that information from books would help me so much as the word of a living and surviving voice."¹⁰³ Now, Papias tells us that he learned from his master, "John the Ancient," that Peter's preaching was put in writing by one of his disciples, Mark. The precious fragment containing this information is so important that it deserves to be quoted in full.

"And the Presbyter [John] used to say this, 'Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered, not, indeed, in order, of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had not heard the Lord, nor had he followed Him, but later on, as I said, followed Peter, who used to give teaching as necessity demanded but not making, as it were, an arrangement of the Lord's oracles, so that Mark did nothing wrong in thus writing down single points as he remembered them. For to one thing he gave attention, to leave out nothing of what he had heard and to make no false statements in them.'¹⁰⁴

As we read these lines, we seem to be witnessing the process

¹⁰² Eusebius, III, xxxix, 1.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*, no. 4.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, no. 15.

by which St. Mark's Gospel was written. Papias says further that "Matthew collected the oracles in the Hebrew language, and each interpreted them as best he could."¹⁰⁵ From the prologue of the Third Gospel we know that the author, Luke, a disciple of St. Paul, undertook to write the history of Jesus in chronological order, which the aged witness of those times states was absent from St. Mark's. Here, then, we have the whole story of the composition of the three Synoptic Gospels. As to the date of their composition, that seems fixed thereby. The appearance of the three Gospels preceded the appearance of the Acts of the Apostles, and the latter, written by St. Luke, was published about 62 or 64; therefore this date seems the latest that can be assigned for the composition of the three Synoptics.¹⁰⁶

Shortly afterwards we see another collection being formed, that of the Catholic Epistles, *i. e.*, letters addressed to the whole Church. Into this collection was admitted a greater or lesser number of Epistles, according to local differences. Finally seven came to be agreed upon by all. These seven letters are the three Epistles of St. John, the two of St. Peter, that of St. Jude, and that of St. James. By the addition of St. John's Gospel and his Apocalypse, of which we shall speak presently, the canon, that is, the official list of the books of the New Testament, became fixed; the Christian Bible was thus complete.¹⁰⁷

Later on the Church was to proclaim the authenticity of

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, no. 16.

¹⁰⁶ See Batiffol, *Orpheus et l'Evangile*, p. 132. Harnack (*Die Apostelgeschichte*, p. 22) holds the same view as we have just set forth. Some Catholic authors, basing their conclusions on a text of St. Irenaeus (*Haereses*, bk. 3, chap. 1), prefer placing the writing of St. Mark's and St. Luke's Gospels after the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul. But that passage is a mutilated text and has not the meaning supposed, as Cornely proves in his *Introductio ad Novum Testamentum*, III, 76-78.

¹⁰⁷ On the formation of the canon of the New Testament, see Batiffol, *Orpheus et l'Evangile*, pp. 55-80.

these collections. On all sides Christians were eager to fix upon the accounts of the ancients, to gather their teachings. St. Luke, at the beginning of his Gospel, refers to an abundant literary growth. This subsequently increased still more. The apocryphal gospels—the name given to those histories of Jesus which the Church rejected from her canon—at times had the childish character of popular legends, or the perverse tendency of heresy. A mere comparison of their fanciful and fabricated narratives with the serious and religious soberness of the canonical Gospels is enough to show the genuineness of the latter. It is true that each of the authors adopted by the Church has his own style and a definite aim. St. Matthew's style is simple, uniform, and unstudied; and it is evident that his aim is to show his compatriots, the Christians of Palestine, the fulfilment of the prophecies in Christ. St. Mark is animated, picturesque, and always has in mind the Roman world; by the narration of our Lord's many miracles he wishes to impress upon that world the almighty power of God. St. Luke's narrative reveals a literary culture superior to that of his predecessors, and his purpose to spread the catholic ideas of his teacher, St. Paul.

But the three writings resemble one another in their life-like and precise character. The image that rises in the mind of one who reads these gospels is that of all Galilee and Judea before the destruction of Jerusalem. Skeptical Sadducees, hypocritical Pharisees, the timid disciples of Jesus, all these pass along one after the other on the shore of that Lake Tiberias so colorful with its population of fishermen, on those roads that are burned by the hot sun, through the ripening harvests, and in that great city of Jerusalem where scribes carry on their discussions in the Temple porticoes. The portrait of Jesus traced by these unlettered writers is so utterly inimitable that the cry wrung from the unbelieving philosopher will ever issue from the lips of whoever reads these

gospels with a sincere and upright heart. Their words "speak to the heart," and if they were the work of invention, "their contrivers would be more astounding than is the hero."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Rousseau, *Emile*, in *Œuvres* (Didot ed.), II, 597.—As to the order in which the three Gospels were written, Lebreton thus sums up the latest critical conclusions, which simply return to the traditional positions: "The primitive catechesis is embodied in the Aramaic Gospel of St. Matthew and, in Greek, in St. Peter's preaching. This latter was followed by St. Mark, while St. Matthew's collection is preserved in St. Luke's Gospel, and more exactly in the Greek Gospel of St. Matthew. These two other gospels thus utilize St. Mark's narrative and a few secondary sources." (Lebreton, "*Les Evangiles synoptiques*," in the *Recherches des sciences religieuses*, 1910, p. 505; cf. Stanton, *The Gospels as Historical Documents*, Part II.)

CHAPTER V

The Early Church and the Eastern World (68-100)

THE mysterious personage whose testimony is so stressed by Papias and whom he calls John the Ancient, has always stirred the ingenuity of historians and exegetes. Our own opinion is that this person is the Apostle himself. Papias' text appears clear. True, Eusebius makes John out to be a different person; but his interpretation of the text, which he quotes, is apparently inspired by a desire to take from the Apostle John the authorship of the Apocalypse. The Bishop of Caesarea rejected the doctrine of this book and ascribed it to a writer of less authority.¹

¹ The following is the famous text of Papias, as recorded by Eusebius: "I shall not hesitate to append to the interpretations all that I ever learnt well from the presbyters and remember well, for of their truth I am confident. For unlike most I did not rejoice in them who say much, but in them who teach the truth, nor in them who recount the commandments of others, but in them who repeated those given to the faith by the Lord and derived from truth itself; but if ever anyone came who had followed the presbyters, I inquired into the words of the presbyters, what Andrew or Peter or Philip or Thomas or James or John or Matthew, or any other of the Lord's disciples, had said, and what Aristion and the presbyter John, the Lord's disciples, were saying." (Eusebius, *H. E.*, III, xxxix, 4.) The Presbyter John, the Lord's disciple, is mentioned twice: once among those who had spoken (in the past), and once among those who were still speaking (in the present); this is because he is the sole survivor of the Apostles, because he alone of them still speaks. Moreover, the intention of showing that there is question of one and the same person is evident from the identity of the titles attached to the two names. It is always "the Presbyter John," John "the disciple of the Lord." Eusebius, whose antipathy for John's Apocalypse is well known, and who had it from Dionysius of Corinth that the Apocalypse was the work of a certain John, distinct from the Apostle John, eagerly seizes upon Papias' double mention of John and uses that fact as an argument for his view. He says: "This calls for attention: for it is probable that the second John is the one who saw the revelation which passes under the name of John." (Eusebius, III, xxxix, 5.) In his desire to strengthen the opinion which he wanted to have accepted, Eusebius

St. John

Thus far we have scarcely met the name of the Apostle John.² Up to the last years of the century of the Apostles, tradition as well as Scripture is almost silent about the labors of the second son of Zebedee. This "son of thunder" had not yet taken those sublime flights presaged by the impetuosity of his character and the ardor of his love. The "disciple that Jesus loved," whose head rested on the Savior's breast at the Last Supper, out of obedience to a divine mission from his Master³ must have led a life of silence and prayer and recollection in the modest home where he received the Blessed Virgin. More than once our Lord restrained the imprudent vehemence of that ardor; and it was used in laying the foundations of an interior life that would some day reveal its great depth. In close association with the Blessed Mother, the soul of this virgin Apostle was enriched with unction and charity, while losing nothing of its force. The thunder of his voice would be heard, but at the hour and in the manner marked out by God.

After the Blessed Virgin's death, at which he was present,⁴

appeals to two reasons, which are not very cogent, namely: that the second John is called Presbyter—but so is the first; and that Ephesus has two monuments to John, which Eusebius lets us suppose are burial monuments—but the very term which Eusebius had to use, *μνήματα*, indicates "memorial" monuments. It is not surprising that two monuments of this kind should have been erected in honor of the same person.

² There is no further mention of him after the day when St. Paul came to Jerusalem to set forth his gospel before "James and Cephas and John," who were then regarded as "pillars" of the Church. (Gal. 2: 1, 2, 9.)

³ John 19: 27.

⁴ Probably at Jerusalem. "An arbitrary interpretation of an obscure text of the Council of Ephesus is the sole foundation on which is based the opinion which locates the last residence and the tomb of the Blessed Virgin at Ephesus. . . . The tradition which records that Jerusalem was the last home of the Holy Virgin rests, on the contrary, upon explicit testimony, which, it is true, only dates back to the fifth century." (Fouard, *St. John and the Close of the Apostolic Age*, p. 72.)

after the death of the other Apostles, who were martyred for their faith, John was the only one left of the intimate group which had received the Savior's confidences. The eyes of the entire Church then turned to the beloved Apostle. Everyone felt a presentiment of some mysterious destiny in his regard. Once our Lord, speaking of John, had said: "So I will have him remain till I come, what is it to thee?"⁵ And a rumor spread that this disciple would not die.⁶ But Jesus had said also: "You shall indeed drink of the chalice that I drink of; and with the baptism wherewith I am baptized, you shall be baptized."⁷

At a date which cannot be determined with absolute exactness, between the death of SS. Peter and Paul and the destruction of Jerusalem, the Apostle John fixed his residence at Ephesus.⁸ With some likelihood we can date his arrival about the year 68. Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, speaks of a whole crowd of ancients gathered about John.⁹ The departure of this colony is naturally explained by the dispersion that took place two years before the destruction of the Holy City. Ephesus was in constant relation with Jerusalem. Many Jews lived in Ephesus and openly practiced their religion, thanks to the privileges which Hircanus had obtained for them from Dolabella.¹⁰ These Jews came to Jerusalem in large numbers to perform their devotions in the Temple. Probably many of them were witnesses to the Pentecostal miracles, and it is not unlikely that a Christian community was formed in Ephesus at an early date. Its membership seems to have been composed

⁵ John 21:22.

⁶ *Idem*, 21:23.

⁷ Mark 10:39.

⁸ The testimony of tradition is unanimous on this point. Harnack (*Die Chronologie der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius*, I, 320-381) and Jean Réville (*Le quatrième évangile*, pp. 9-18) have vainly tried to shake the authentic and reliable testimony of St. Irenaeus on this point. (*Haereses*, II, xxii, 5.)

⁹ Eusebius, III, xxix.

¹⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, XIV, x, 11-13.

mostly of disciples of John the Baptist. St. Paul, upon returning from Galatia, found at Ephesus certain insufficiently trained Christians, who contented themselves with the precursor's baptism.¹¹ In spite of violent opposition, the preaching of the Apostle of the Gentiles succeeded there wonderfully, so that he said: "A great door and evident is opened unto me; and many adversaries."¹² The First Epistle to Timothy informs us that Paul, prevented from continuing his apostolate at Ephesus, entrusted to this disciple, who was a native of the country, the direction of the Church which he had established there.¹³

It was a providential choice that John and his companions made in fixing upon the city of Ephesus for their residence. Being on the coast of Ionia, almost opposite the island of Samos, Ephesus occupied one of the choicest sites as a place of transit between the East and the West. Commercial activity, great though it was, did not absorb the people's minds. From time immemorial that city had been a great center of religious activity. Its temple, venerated throughout the world, kept alive, more than did any other place, the religious craving which was then disturbing so many pagan souls.

And so we presently see John and the group of his disciples becoming the center of an important movement. The Churches of Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea soon placed themselves under his direction. Before recounting the history of this new development of Christianity, it will be profitable to cast a rapid glance over the general situation of the Church in Palestine, Rome, and Asia Minor.

Christianity in Palestine

We have already said that the Christian community of

¹¹ Acts 19: 1-5.

¹² See 1 Cor. 16: 9.

¹³ See 1 Tim. 1: 3; cf. 2 Tim. 1: 18; 4: 12.

Jerusalem had mostly taken refuge in the city of Pella. They soon founded a new center of equal importance somewhat farther north, in the city of Kochaba.¹⁴ But in both places the refugees lived under precarious conditions. Most of them had no resources other than their labor. Eusebius relates how, a few years later, our Lord's relatives, summoned before their persecutors, who were somewhat disquieted by the report of their noble birth, "showed their hands, adducing as testimony of their labor the hardness of their bodies, and the tough skin which had been embossed on their hands from their incessant work."¹⁵ The same historian, basing his statement on an ancient text of Hegesippus, tells us that the successor of James the Less in the episcopate was also a relative of the Savior. It was Simeon, the son of Cleophas, cousin-german of our Lord.¹⁶ He was martyred under Trajan about the year 110.¹⁷ At the time of which we are now speaking, he bore his adversity with a heroism worthy of his glorious predecessor. In him seemed to live again that Apostle James who had so forcefully anathematized wealth and had said: "Hath not God chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?"¹⁸ But these praiseworthy Christians, it seems, did not recruit adepts. They were devout and austere, and whole-heartedly attached to Christ; but as they had not yet broken sufficiently with Israel's past, they remained almost altogether outside the great movement that would regenerate the world by freeing it from the Law.

Christianity at Rome

In spite of appearances, the situation at Rome was hardly any better. In many respects the first two Flavian emperors

¹⁴ St. Epiphanius, *Haereses*, xxx, 2.

¹⁵ Eusebius, III, xx.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, III, xi and xxxii.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, IV, v.

¹⁸ James 2: 5.

(Vespasian and Titus) deserved the praise later voiced by St. Augustine, when he called them "the most benignant emperors."¹⁹ The good will that they accorded the Jews extended to the Christians.²⁰ But neither of these emperors abolished that principle of public law which, looking upon Christianity as opposed to the Roman civilization, served as a ground for the Neronian persecution. "Every one of Nero's institutes was abolished," says Tertullian, "except his edict of persecution."²¹

The third emperor of the Flavian family was Domitian. The beginning of his rule gave the Christians equally great hopes, but also aroused terrible suspicions. While men of letters, highly honored by the new emperor,²² showered their praises upon him,²³ common rumor accused him of the death of his brother Titus,²⁴ and some discerning persons questioned whether his virtues were not more apparent than real. The last two years of Domitian's reign fulfilled the most sinister anticipations.

Meanwhile the Christian Church profited by the broad tolerance which the Emperor granted it. The faith entered the ranks of the highest Roman society and was openly practiced.

¹⁹ *City of God*, v, 21.

²⁰ Some writers, on the basis of a text of St. Hilary (*Contra Arianos*, 3) and an inscription preserved in the crypt of the Church of St. Martin at Rome, have placed Vespasian among the persecutors. But in St. Hilary's text Vespasian is named probably by mistake in place of his son Domitian (Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, I, 85); and the inscription in St. Martin's Church is certainly false, as Marucchi shows (*Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, I, 20).

²¹ "*Permansit, erosis omnibus, institutum neronianum.*" (Tertullian, *Ad nationes*, I, 7.) Tertullian refers to Nero's charge against the Christians independently of the accusation of setting fire to Rome—namely, that they were enemies of mankind, *i. e.*, of the Roman civilization.

²² Tacitus and Pliny were decorated by him with the pretorship. (Tacitus, *Annals*, xi, 11; Pliny, *Epistles*, iii, 11; vii, 16.)

²³ Quintilian calls him "the most righteous of censors" (*Institutes of Oratory*, bk. 4, pref.). Martial praises him because under him "chastity was commanded to enter our homes." (*Epigrams*, vi, 2-4, 7.)

²⁴ Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, LXVI, 26.

Evidence of this may be seen in the appearances of the cemeteries of the Flavians' time. All of them are even with the ground; their entrances are never disguised; they open upon the fields, along the highways, and sometimes display monumental façades. "Some of these burial-places, excavated with magnificent and almost royal care, are adorned with every refinement of art."²⁵ Among the cemeteries of this period we may note, on the Via Salaria, the catacomb of Priscilla, belonging to the noble line of the Pudens; on the Ostian road, the cemetery of Lucina, who is probably none other than the famous patrician Pomponia Graecina; and near the Porta Ardeatina, the great burial domain of the Flavians, belonging to the grand-daughter of Vespasian, Flavia Domitilla.²⁶

Popes Linus, Cletus, and Clement I

The three popes who, during this period, presided over the destinies of the Church of Rome belonged to the lowest ranks of the people. The first, LINUS, was, it is supposed, a former slave. At least this is what certain historians think

²⁵ De Rossi, *Inscriptiones christianae Urbis Romae*, p. 2. The history of the catacombs is divided into four periods. During the first period (the first two centuries), the catacombs were family burial places, protected by the law, and recognized to be *loca sacra, loca religiosa*. The owners of these tombs, or rather private cemeteries, sometimes of vast extent, including gardens and houses, with dining-rooms for funeral feasts, could receive in them the bodies of their clients. Wealthy Christians admitted the bodies of poor Christians into their burying-grounds, and there, instead of funeral banquets, liturgical meetings took place. During the third century, the Church, profiting by the Roman law regarding associations, founded common cemeteries. This was the second period. During the third period (from Constantine to Alaric, 313 to 340), no more cemeteries were established except at the surface of the ground; yet the catacombs continued to be a place of pilgrimage, and many Christians insisted upon being laid to rest near the venerated remains of their predecessors. This was the period of the great inscriptions, many of them due to Pope Damasus. Lastly, beginning in 410, the catacombs ceased to be places of burial, and no inscriptions were placed on the tombs; yet they continued to be visited for several centuries. This was the fourth period of their history. (Cf. Marucchi, *op. cit.*, I, 113-117.)

²⁶ Marucchi, *op. cit.*, I. 23.

may be inferred from his very name.²⁷ This first successor of St. Peter seems, in any event, to have belonged to a very humble class. We know almost nothing of his pontificate. St. Epiphanius supplies us with a list of the first eleven popes according to a very ancient document; he says that Linus governed the Church for twelve years.²⁸ The tradition recorded in the *Liber Pontificalis* adds that he maintained the regulations established by St. Peter,²⁹ that he died a martyr, and was buried on the Vatican hill.³⁰

Of the life of his successor, ANACLETUS (or CLETUS) even less is known.³¹ It would seem that his name, too, must be that of a slave or freedman. Probably he belonged to that group of poor people that formed the first nucleus of the Church of Rome. Perhaps this humble disciple of the Apostles changed his name from Anacletus ("the blameless") to Cletus ("the called" of the Lord). Like his two predecessors, he was martyred.³² Eusebius says his pontificate lasted twelve years.³³ Perhaps this figure should be reduced two or three years.

Cletus' successor in the see of Peter was CLEMENT I. After the names of the Apostles there is none more venerable and illustrious in Christian antiquity. Less than a hundred years

²⁷ Fouard, *St. John*, p. 49. Duchesne (*Liber pontificalis*, I, 121) observes that "this name is extremely rare in Christian epigraphy."

²⁸ Epiphanius, *Haereses*, xxvii, 6.

²⁹ The *Liber Pontificalis* seems to say that he began to govern the Church during the lifetime of St. Peter, and many writers are of opinion that St. Peter, being occupied in the labors of the apostolate, left the administration of the Roman Church to Linus and Cletus. (Rufinus, Preface to the *Recognitions* of St. Clement.) But this opinion is now generally rejected.

³⁰ Duchesne, *Lib. pont.*, I, 121. De Rossi does not venture to declare that the sarcophagus discovered underground in the seventeenth century, near the confession of St. Peter, is the authentic tomb of St. Linus. (Duchesne, *loc. cit.*) St. Peter's successor is probably the person mentioned by St. Paul, 2 Tim. 4: 21.

³¹ Duchesne (*op. cit.*, I, lxix) gives reasons which incline one to regard Cletus and Anacletus as the same person. (Cf. De Smedt, *Dissertationes selectae*, VII, art. 2.)

³² Duchesne, *loc. cit.*

³³ Eusebius, III, xv.

after the death of Clement of Rome, as he is called, his figure is adorned with a wonderful halo. The Christians appeal to his authority, and heretics seek shelter under his respected name. A whole pseudo-Clementine literature arose. In spite of this fame, perhaps because of it, his life and writings are surrounded with shadow. Legend became mingled with his history to such an extent as almost completely to obscure it. He is said to have been of senatorial rank, related to the Flavian dynasty. Some historians even identify him with the Consul Titius Flavius Clemens, Domitian's cousin, whom the Emperor had executed on a charge of "atheism," *i. e.*, Christianity. But then how are we to explain the silence of the Fathers regarding the raising of a member of the imperial family to be the head of the Roman Church? It is more reasonable to suppose that Pope Clement was a simple freedman, or the son of a freedman, of the household of the Consul Clement.³⁴ Tillemont, and other scholars after him, thought that the contents and form of Clement's letter to the Corinthians indicate that he was of Jewish origin.³⁵ What is certain, however, is that no more genuine witness to the Apostolic tradition can be found. St. Irenaeus says: "This man [Clement], as he had seen the blessed Apostles [Peter and Paul], and had been conversant with them, might be said to have the preaching of the Apostles still echoing in his ears and their traditions before his eyes."³⁶ Following Origen and Eusebius, many have attributed to him the writing of the

³⁴ Lightfoot establishes a great likelihood for this hypothesis. (*The Apostolic Fathers*, I, 60-63.)

³⁵ Tillemont, *Mémoires sur les six premiers siècles*, II, 149-166, 545-568; De Rossi, *Bullettino di archeol. crist.*, 1863, pp. 27 ff.; 1865, p. 20; Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, I, 16-61; Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 162.

³⁶ Irenaeus, *Haereses*, III, iii, 3. Duchesne (*op. cit.*, I, 161) says that Clement was old enough to have seen the Apostles and to have conversed with them, as St. Irenaeus asserts. Origen identifies him with the person of the same name who labored with St. Paul in the evangelization of Philippi. (Origen, *In Joannem*, I, 29.)

Epistle to the Hebrews under the inspiration of St. Paul, or at least the translation of this epistle from the original Aramaic text.³⁷ The only authentic writing of St. Clement of Rome is the lengthy and beautiful Epistle to the Corinthians.

From the text itself it appears that this letter was written at the end of a great persecution, probably the one that broke out against the Christians of Rome in 95.

The fears shown by some far-sighted men at the outset of Domitian's reign regarding his natural inclinations, were in fact accentuated and generalized. On the pretext of adorning the city of Rome and of increasing the happiness of his subjects, the Emperor spent great sums of money foolishly. By immense constructions, by endless festivities which Martial and Statius glorified in their poems, the imperial treasury was exhausted; the intoxication of power, a sort of madness, occupied a more and more predominant place in the ruler's soul. Domitian was one of those unscrupulous men whom necessity makes rapacious and fear cruel.³⁸ Rome trembled at seeing the return of the worst days of Nero. Public opinion was not mistaken. As under Nero, the Christian Church was the first to suffer from the outburst of tyranny. The development of Christianity, retarded in Judea, was likewise halted in Rome.

Alexandria

By good fortune, at that very time Asia Minor became wide open for the spread of the gospel. Next to the city of Ephesus, Alexandria seemed to promise the brightest future for the Christian religion.

Like Ephesus, which became the metropolis of the Roman province of Asia in 129 B. C., the city built by Alexander the

³⁷ Eusebius, VI, xxiii.

³⁸ "*Inopia rapax, metu saevus.*" (Suetonius, *Domitian*, 3.)

Great and containing his tomb, a century later also fell under the might of Rome. Old Egypt became a Roman province and its great capital was thereafter the center and a sort of rallying place for the world of philosophers, thinkers, poets, artists, and mathematicians. Under Roman sway, however, Alexandria jealously kept its religious autonomy. The vast temple of Serapis, which from the top of its artificial hill surveyed the commercial activity of the whole city, appeared to symbolize that haughty independence. *There* was located the great library containing 200,000 volumes, which Antony brought from Pergamus to replace that of the Museum which had been burned when Julius Caesar set fire to the Egyptian fleet. This library was the meeting-place of Alexandrian Hellenism and of Jewish culture. The Jews had long been settled in Egypt. At Alexandria they formed an important community which, in this city of a million souls,³⁹ reached a figure of more than 300,000, about one-third of the total population.⁴⁰ One of our canonical books, Wisdom, was probably written at Alexandria toward the middle of the second century B. C.⁴¹ The Bible had there been translated into Greek under the first Ptolemies, between 280 and 230 B. C. The Jewish books had an influence upon the notions of Greek philosophy. And Alexandrian Judaism, though still venerating at Jerusalem the center of the theocratic religion, was renewed by contact with Hellenic civilization. From this reciprocal influence was born the work of Philo.

We have very little information about the life of this Jewish writer, who was a contemporary of Christ. We know only that his brother, or rather the son of his brother, was alabarch, or chief collector of the customs at Alexandria, and that Philo himself was deputed by his fellow-Jews (A. D. 40) to go to

³⁹ *Dict. de la Bible*, I, col. 354.

⁴⁰ Duchesne, *op. cit.*, I, 239.

⁴¹ *Dict. de la Bible*, I, col. 356; Touzard, in *Où en est l'histoire des religions*, sec. 7, nos. 148-152.

Rome to appease the wrath of Caligula, who had been angered against the Jews because they refused to adore him as a god.⁴² Philo of Alexandria was principally an exegete, but applied Plato's idealism in the interpretation of the holy books. Many Fathers of the Church speak of him with a respect that borders on admiration. Philo had none of the narrowness of the Pharisees attached to the letter of the Law. He was a man of mysticism and inner worship. With him the idea of philosophy and that of revelation, far from being mutually exclusive, harmonize with each other.⁴³ But it is also noteworthy that the ideas which Philo sets forth in his books are not so much personal, as they are ideas slowly and deeply elaborated in the Alexandrian atmosphere, ideas that, outside the limited circle of scholars, penetrated into the minds of the ordinary people.⁴⁴

Such being the case, Alexandrian philosophy, if ill directed, might contribute to the perversion of the Christian movement and might lead it in the direction of vague and dissolvent fancies; but if wisely regulated, it might become, by its broad spirit, a powerful instrument in the spread of Chris-

⁴² Beurlier, *Le culte impérial*, pp. 264-271.

⁴³ Bréhier, *Les Idées philosophiques et religieuses de Philon d'Alexandrie*, pp. 311-318. Cf. Louis, *Philon le Juif*; Lebreton (*Les Théories du Logos au début de l'ère chrétienne*, in *Etudes*, vol. 106, and *Les Origines de la Trinité*) shows that Philo's doctrine is fundamentally a Jewish doctrine, altered and distorted, not a doctrine taken from the pagans, as was once claimed. For Philo, the Logos is "the world of the ideas of the personal God according to Moses." The origin of this conception is connected with the Sapiential literature of the Old Testament. "In Palestine, as also in Egypt, the Jews were accustomed to meditate upon these inspired pages, notably Baruch 3: 10-38; Job, chap. 28; and especially Prov., chaps. 1 to 9; Ecclu. 24: 5-47; Wisdom 7: 10; 10: 17. Considering the outward operation of this Wisdom, we find it very similar to the Logos of the Stoics or the popular Hermes of Egypt or the *amesha spenta* of Persia or the Logos of Philo. But the Scriptural notion of the hypostatic Wisdom, in which Israel adored the only true God, is quite opposed to the pantheistic materialism of the Porch, as also to the mythological phantasies of Egypt and Persia, which were an undefinable product of Alexandrian speculation. The contemporary apocrypha, as also the books of the Bible, show how deeply this notion had penetrated the minds of the chosen people." (D'Alès, in *Etudes*, 1912, p. 90.)

⁴⁴ Bréhier, *loc. cit.*

tianity. It is a fact that, at a very early date, Alexandria was entered by missionaries of the gospel. According to Eusebius, the first Christian community there was founded by St. Mark.⁴⁵ It is probable that the Alexandrians and the Cyrenians who were present at Pentecost may have preceded him there. The Acts of the Apostles tells us that one of the most eloquent preachers of the good tidings, Apollo, "one mighty in the Scriptures, fervent in spirit," was a native of Alexandria. Alexandrian Jews are mentioned among the adversaries of Stephen.⁴⁶ Soon, beside brilliant apologists of the school of Clement of Alexandria, the Gnostic sects began to increase. Both truth and error appeared in a powerful and spirited manner, overflowing with life and splendor.

The influence of Alexandrian culture was not confined to the Roman province of Egypt; it entered the province of Asia, the capital of which was Ephesus. This province was not limited to Ionia, strictly so called, *i. e.*, the valleys of the Meander, the Cayster, and the Hermus; it embraced Mysia as far as Mount Olympus, Lydia, Caria, and a part of Phrygia.⁴⁷ The Apostle of the Gentiles had exercised his zeal there, and St. Peter went there to strengthen the faith of the neophytes won by St. Paul. Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Loadicea, like Ephesus, faithfully kept the memory of their great founder; but curious mystical conceits, germs of the Gnostic and Judaizing heresies that soon powerfully declared themselves, were threatening to corrupt the purity of the faith there. The arrival of "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was, therefore, most opportune. St. Paul, disputing with the doctors of an enslaving Law, had given them the theory of a liberating grace. John, as a genuine witness, now spoke to them of that Word of life "which he had

⁴⁵ Eusebius, *H. E.*, II, xvi.

⁴⁶ Acts 6:9.

⁴⁷ Marquardt, *Römische Staatsverwaltung*, I, 333 ff.

seen with his own eyes and touched with his hands.”⁴⁸ Those intensely earnest people of Asia had been won by Paul’s fiery arguments; they now fed their souls upon John’s more tender and mystical words. Not that the “Apostle of Love” ever suppressed the necessity of precise doctrine and a supreme authority in the Church. Quite otherwise. No one ever showed greater severity and horror against the heretic who betrays his Master as Judas did. John will not have hospitality extended to such a traitor, not even a simple greeting; he who greets a heretic “communicateth with his wicked works.”⁴⁹ Since the Word of God was made flesh, since He came into this world, that He might bring it light and life,⁵⁰ this light and life must serve to distinguish the children of God from the children of the devil, the children of light from the children of darkness.⁵¹ But the Apostle’s firm and uncompromising stand in the presence of evil came solely from the strength and fervor of his love. His hearers felt it deeply; their speech—he showed a remarkable facility in making use of its turns and phrases—becomes the means by which the genius of Asia and that of Europe fraternize in the spirit of the gospel.

Disciples of St. John

John did not come alone to Ephesus. With him he brought companions and disciples, or at least he was visited and aided by several of them.

Among these brethren in the apostolate, we know especially the Apostle Philip.⁵² Like John, he was born on the shores

⁴⁸ 1 John 1:1.

⁴⁹ 2 John 11.

⁵⁰ John 1:1-14.

⁵¹ John 3:19 f.

⁵² Eusebius seems to confuse the Apostle Philip with Philip the deacon. Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus in the latter part of the second century, who had every means of being well informed, says positively that St. John’s companion in Asia was the Apostle Philip. The fragment from Polycrates is in Eusebius, III, xxxi.

of Lake Tiberias, and a particular bond of friendship seems to have united the two Apostles. It was to Philip that Christ had addressed those profound words: "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?"⁵³ The earliest traditions tell us that he preached the gospel in Phrygia; all the records agree that he spent the last years of his life at Hierapolis. He had three daughters: one of them, who was married, was buried at Ephesus; the other two remained virgins and aided the Apostle by devoting themselves to works of charity.⁵⁴

John's three principal disciples, whose names are handed down to us, were Ignatius, Polycarp, and Papias. Ignatius was probably a native of Syria. This, at least, is the conjecture of several scholars.⁵⁵ We have very little information about his life or his labors in the Church of Antioch, of which he was bishop.⁵⁶ But the letter he wrote to the Christians of Rome, on his way to martyrdom in that city, enables us to penetrate the depths of his great soul. History can boast of none more courageous in the face of death.

Polycarp is likewise known to us by his glorious martyrdom, but we are ignorant both of his family and birthplace. Tertullian relates that Polycarp was made bishop of Smyrna by St. John.⁵⁷ It is by his authority, often appealed to by his disciple St. Irenaeus, that the Church of Gaul glories in having received the pure Apostolic tradition. St. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, in his old age, wrote as follows to the heretic Florinus:

"These opinions [that you teach], O Florinus, that I may speak sparingly, do not belong to sound doctrine. These opinions are in-

⁵³ John 14: 10.

⁵⁴ Eusebius, *H. E.*, III, xxxi.

⁵⁵ But their arguments are contested by the Maronite Assemani, *Bibl. orient.*, vol. III, part i, p. 16.

⁵⁶ Cf. Eusebius, *Chron.*, 11th year of Trajan.

⁵⁷ Tertullian, *De praescr.*, 32.

consistent with the Church. . . . I can speak even of the place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and disputed, how he came in and went out, the character of his life, the appearance of his body, the discourses which he made to the people, how he reported his intercourse with John, and with the others who had seen the Lord, how he remembered their words, and what were the things concerning the Lord which he had heard from them, and about their miracles, and about their teaching, and how Polycarp had received them from the eyewitnesses of the word of life. . . . I listened eagerly even then to these things through the mercy of God which was given me, and made notes of them, not on paper, but in my heart. . . . I can bear witness before God that if that blessed and Apostolic presbyter had heard anything of this kind he would have cried out and shut his ears. . . . He would have fled even from the place in which he was seated or standing when he heard such words.”⁵⁸

We saw Papias’ testimony in connection with the question of the composition of the Gospels. Of his life we are as uninformed as in the cases of Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna. We know that he was bishop of Hierapolis. Eusebius calls him “a man of varied education and notably well versed in the Holy Scripture.” He took great pains to gather the oral traditions regarding the Savior’s life and words; for this purpose he visited several churches and summed up what he learned in five books entitled: *Exegesis of the Words of the Lord*. The extant fragments of this work are of the highest value for the history of Christian origins.⁵⁹ Although conscientious in what he relates, Papias seems to have lacked tact and discernment in the interpretation of doctrine. Eusebius says: “I suppose that he got these notions by

⁵⁸ Eusebius, *H. E.*, V, xx, 4-7.

⁵⁹ They were published by Harnack, *Patrum apostolicorum opera*, and by Funk, *Patres apostolici*. In the thirteenth century, the *Exegesis* of Papias was still extant. Mention is made of it in a catalogue of the cathedral of Nîmes dating from that century.

a perverse reading of the Apostolic accounts, not realizing that they [the Apostles] spoke mystically and symbolically.”⁶⁰ Thus it happened that his work, undertaken to preserve the most genuine traditions, was later used by the millenarians, who appealed to his authority in behalf of their fanciful views.

Among the “disciples of the Lord” whom Papias had seen and consulted, he mentions Andrew, Peter, Thomas, James, and Matthew.⁶¹ These Apostles must have visited their brethren in Asia only in passing. The two chiefs in whom the East gloried were John and Philip. Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, writes: “Two great stars have set in Asia, but they will rise at the last day: Philip, one of the Twelve, whose remains lie at rest at Hierapolis, and John the Apostle, who slept upon the Savior’s breast, and who, martyr and doctor, has his tomb at Ephesus.”⁶² The real head of the churches of Asia was John the Apostle. We shall presently see the proof of this in the *Letter to the Seven Churches*. When St. John reached Asia, the churches founded by St. Paul were about to assume the definite form generally adopted later; one after the other, they were abandoning that assembly of ancients which had governed them, under the direction of a resident bishop or under that of an Apostle, and were placing themselves directly under the authority of a bishop. John, while not attaching himself particularly to any one see, exercised over them all that universal jurisdiction vested by Christ in His Apostles, a jurisdiction that was to end only with the last of them.

The Persecution under Domitian

About the year 95, John’s paternal governance was suddenly disturbed by the violent persecution of Domitian. The

⁶⁰ Eusebius, *H. E.*, III, xxxix, 12. Eusebius calls him “a man of very little intelligence.” (*Ibid.*, no. 13.)

⁶¹ Eusebius, *H. E.*, III, xxxix.

⁶² *Idem*, III, xxxi, 3.

amazing extravagance of the last of the twelve Caesars had ruined the public treasury. There was no hope of filling the void by an increase of land-taxes or indirect taxes which already weighed so heavily on the commerce of Rome. The Emperor thought of the tax which, since the year 70, all those of Jewish birth paid their conqueror; he now extended it to those who "lived as Jews."⁶³ The expression was vague; it opened the way to most odious searching and inquiring. At any rate, it applied to the Christians, and perhaps had them chiefly in mind. By means of countless official informers,⁶⁴ Domitian was able to learn of the progress made by the new religion among the great Roman families. It is well known that the property of all persons condemned to death or proscribed escheated to the Emperor.

Many Christians refused to let themselves be taken for Jews. The separation of the two religions was by this time a fact. To pay the Jewish tax seemed to them a lie, nay, a kind of abjuration of the faith. The Emperor was angered. Who were these people, strangers to the religions officially sanctioned at Rome, who "lived as Jews," but repudiated the religion of the Jewish people? The epithets "innovators" and "atheists" were cast at them.

Inquisitorial proceedings increased. Domitian's fury was at its height, when one of his informers pointed out to him, among the Judaizers and "atheists," his own cousin-german, Flavius Clemens, father of two children whom he intended for the imperial service. Flavius Clemens, the consul of that year (95), was the son of Vespasian's elder brother, Flavius Sabinus, who was prefect of Rome in the time of Nero and who in 64 witnessed the massacre of Christians. This Sabinus, it seems, had been deeply and painfully impressed. Tacitus

⁶³ Suetonius, *Domitian*, 12.

⁶⁴ Tacitus, *History*, IV, 50; *Life of Agricola*, 45; Pliny, *Letters*, I, 5; II, 11; Juvenal, IV, 110-118.

relates that in Sabinus' last years his gentleness, moderation, and aversion for sanguinary contests were spoken of and even led some people of fiery temper to accuse him of cowardice.⁶⁵ Sabinus' son and daughter-in-law courageously embraced the Christian religion. It was a case of death or proscription. Flavius Clemens was executed in the very year of his consulate. Flavia Domitilla, his wife, was exiled to the island of Pandataria. Another Flavia Domitilla, their niece, was interned on the island of Pontia. The historian Dion Cassius, relating their execution, says they were condemned for the crime of "atheism."⁶⁶ Suetonius seems to allude to other executions of Christians of the highest station when he writes: "He put to death many senators, among them several ex-consuls, including Civia Cerealis, at the very time when he was proconsul in Asia, Salvidienus, Ortus, Acilius Glabrio while he was in exile—these on the ground of plotting revolution [*quasi molitores rerum novarum*]."⁶⁷ Glabrio was consul in 61.

Besides need for money and hatred of the Christian name, another feeling entered the tyrant's soul—fear. Hegesippus, as quoted by Eusebius, tells that, "like Herod, he [Domitian] was afraid of the coming of Christ,"⁶⁸ because throughout the East it was being noised abroad that the government of

⁶⁵ Tacitus, *History*, III, 65-75.

⁶⁶ Dio Cassius, LXVII, xiv. Cf. Suetonius, *Domitian*, 15. Fifty years after Clement's death, St. Justin wrote that the pagans still called the Christians atheists. (*First Apology*, 6.) In the legal terminology of Rome, beginning in the second century, the word "atheist" does not, strictly speaking, signify the absolute denial of the Divinity, but rather a refusal to honor the gods of the Empire and to take part in public worship. Those were the only gods recognized by the State. Not only did it recognize them, but it incorporated their worship in the political institutions. While the *sacra privata* and *gentilitia* concerned only the family or the gens, the *sacra publica* were closely associated with the prosperity of the city. The State could compel participation in public worship. Such was the law of Rome. (Cf. Cicero, *De legibus*, II, 8-10; Livy, xxv, 1.)

⁶⁷ Suetonius, *Domitian*, 2.

⁶⁸ Eusebius, *H. E.*, III, xx, 1.

the world would belong to a scion of David. So he ordered a search to be made for all living descendants of that king. The grandsons of Jude, having come to Rome from the depths of Batanea, were sent back after a look at their calloused hands, which evidenced their life of manual labor. It is possible that John, so renowned for his close relations with Jesus, was summoned for the same reason. However this may be, we do know that, having come or been brought to Rome, he there was subjected to the terrible ordeal of boiling oil. We learn of this from Tertullian, who says: "The Apostle John was first plunged, unhurt, into boiling oil, and thence sent back to his island exile."⁶⁹ The traditional site where this event is supposed to have taken place is the Latin Gate or, more exactly, the open space later occupied by the Roman gate.⁷⁰

The tyrant's persecution reached beyond Rome, even into Asia. The Apocalypse, written shortly after, speaks of "the souls of them that were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus." The angel of the Lord says to the angel of Smyrna: "I know thy tribulation," and to the angel of Pergamus: "I know thou hast not denied my faith."⁷¹ The Acts of the martyrdom of St. Ignatius of Antioch relate that "during the storms and persecutions, he diverted the danger by the firmness of his soul."⁷² Pliny, writing from Bithynia in 111 or 112, says that certain Christians avowed to him "that they had quit their faith twenty years ago,"⁷³ very likely in this persecution of Domitian.

The Apocalypse

The island to which Domitian's tribunal banished the

⁶⁹ Tertullian, *De praescr.*, 36.

⁷⁰ Tillemont, *Mémoires*: St. John the Evangelist, art. 5.

⁷¹ Apoc. 2: 9 f., 13; 6: 9-11; 20: 4.

⁷² *Acta S. Ignatii* (ed. by Funk), II, 260.

⁷³ Pliny, *Letters*, x, 96.

Apostle John was one of the Sporades in the Aegean Sea, the most arid and uncultivated of those islands mentioned by ancient Greek poets. A long volcanic mountain chain, its two parts connected by a narrow ridge, barely supported a few sorry orchards. The Apostle was probably obliged to labor in the mines. There it was he learned, perhaps from some Christians who came from Miletus or Ephesus, which were only a few hours' sailing distance away, that in Asia, as at Rome, the Christians were hunted out, despoiled, and put to death for their faith. There, too, he heard of the advance of another dread evil: heresy, which had so greatly disturbed St. Paul, was developing there in an alarming manner. The Apostle of the Gentiles had been much concerned about certain men of Asia who combined an excessive worship of the angelic powers with exaggerated painstaking in the matter of observances, feasts, abstinences, and practices of humiliation, thus lessening the part of the Savior in the work of salvation.⁷⁴ Not long before, in Galatia, the question was one of opposition between the Law and the faith. But here we have to do with a new doctrine, cleverly arranged, with a tendency to corrupt the Christian religion in its very essence. Under the influence of certain men claiming connection with the deacon Nicolas, and calling themselves Nicolaites, the sect spread rapidly. Besides the strange mysteries of its doctrine, it possessed a particular character of immorality in its practices. St. Irenaeus speaks of the "unrestrained indulgence" which he noted among the Nicolaites,⁷⁵ and St. John remarks "the depths of Satan" that he observed therein.⁷⁶ The Apostle's presence in Ephesus had doubtless restrained them; his exile at Patmos seemed to leave them free rein.

⁷⁴ Coloss., chaps. 1 and 2.

⁷⁵ St. Irenaeus, *Haereses*, I, xxvi, 3.

⁷⁶ Apoc. 2: 24.

"On the Lord's Day," *i. e.*, a Sunday, while the soul of the exiled Apostle was afflicted at the thought of so many evils, he was taken up in spirit. He says: "I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet saying: 'What thou seest, write in a book. . . .' And being turned, I saw . . . one like to the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. . . . His voice as the sound of many waters. . . . His face was as the sun shineth in his power. And when I had seen him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying: 'Fear not. I am the first and the last, and alive, and was dead, and behold I am living for ever and ever and have the keys of death and of hell.' " ⁷⁷

Revelations of this sort, "apocalypses" as they were called, were not rare at that period. Supernatural gifts or charisms were frequent in the early Church. Unfortunately, illusion and fraud were mingled in them. Thirty years earlier (A. D. 58), St. Paul had found so many prophets and prophetesses at Corinth that he felt the urgent need of regulating the manifestations of their noisy inspirations.⁷⁸

The account of John's visions, written at Patmos,⁷⁹ or perhaps at Ephesus after his return from exile, was addressed directly to the seven Churches of proconsular Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Indirectly it was destined for the whole Church. A preface, often given the title of "Letter to the Seven Churches," in a tone of authority that we can feel rests on a divine mission, assigns blame and praise to each of the Christian communities. The Church of Ephesus is relaxing from its first

⁷⁷ Apoc. I : 10-18.

⁷⁸ I Cor. 14 : 26.

⁷⁹ Harnack says: "I make profession of this heresy, which attributes the Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel to one and the same author." Harnack, *Chronologie*, I, 675, note.

fervor;⁸⁰ the Christians of Laodicea are lukewarm;⁸¹ those of Sardis are spiritually dead;⁸² the communities of Pergamus and Thyatira allowed themselves to be partly seduced by the Nicolaites.⁸³ Only the Christians of Smyrna and Philadelphia receive nothing but praise, for having courageously suffered persecution from the enemies of the faith.⁸⁴

After this preamble, there begins a series of visions; their strange character and seeming lack of order are at first disconcerting, but their power captivates. As Bossuet says, "All the beauties of Holy Scripture are gathered together in this book. . . . Notwithstanding its depth, the reader feels so gentle an impression and so superb a harmony of God's majesty, that it is something to ravish heaven and earth. . . . In the Gospel we see Jesus Christ as man, talking with men, humble, poor, weak, and suffering. But the Apocalypse is the Gospel of the risen Christ: He there speaks and acts as a conqueror."⁸⁵ The purpose of the book is to encourage the Christians to whom it is addressed, to show them that the triumph of the saints is assured, that the persecuting empire will be laid low, that upon its ruins will rise up a new and glorious Jerusalem. The whole book is an invitation to the Churches to look for strength in the hope of Christ, who will return triumphantly.

This moral aim is the chief intent of the Apocalypse. But we can easily see in it a great dogmatic and liturgical inspiration also.

The doctrine of this book is especially Christological and eschatological.⁸⁶ Christ is called "Alpha and Omega," the

⁸⁰ Apoc. 2: 4 f.

⁸¹ Apoc. 3: 15-20.

⁸² Apoc. 3: 1.

⁸³ Apoc. 2: 14-20.

⁸⁴ Apoc. 2: 9 f.; 3: 7-10.

⁸⁵ Bossuet, *L'Apocalypse*, preface.

⁸⁶ Here and there in the Apocalypse will be found also important indications of doctrine regarding God, the Trinity, the angels, the Church, etc.

"Prince of the kings of the earth," "He that searcheth the reins and hearts," He who has "the keys of death and of hell," the Lord God, the object of adoration for Heaven and earth.

As for this visible world, it will come to an end after frightful calamities. The devil will come forth from the abyss, will seduce nations, and will encompass the city of the saints with enemies. But God and His own will triumph. The wicked will be the everlasting prey of hell, where they will fall with the beast, the false prophet, and the dragon; whereas the just will enter into possession of Heaven. For them God will create a new Heaven, a new earth, a new Jerusalem, where they will reign forever. The Apocalypse furnishes no additional data enabling us to fix upon the date of these catastrophes. Evidently all the figures which it gives are symbolic numbers.⁸⁷ The world must remain ignorant of a date which Christ Himself said He did not know, or was unwilling to reveal even to His most intimate confidants.

The magnificent images by which the Apocalypse represents Christ's eternal glory were destined to exercise a deep influence on the development of Christian liturgy. The slain lamb standing on the throne amid the unnumbered throng of the elect; the ancients gathered about Him, carrying cups that contain the prayers of the saints; the cry of the martyrs rising from beneath the altar; the song of thanksgiving ascending from the multitude to God, like a "new canticle," to glorify the Lamb for having "redeemed us to God in Thy blood, out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation"; the angels

⁸⁷ For example, the number seven, recurring all through the Apocalypse, is plainly symbolic. Besides the seven Churches, there are the seven seals, the seven trumpets, the seven signs, the seven vials, the seven angelic prophecies about great Babylon, the seven characters of the final triumph. (Crampon, *La Sainte Bible*, VII, 434.) The thousand years of peace mean simply a long period of time. The number seven everywhere indicates something accomplished and complete, and the number 666, which is the sign of the beast, indicates the unachieved, the imperfect, the evil, threefold, *i. e.*, characterized absolutely.

standing round about the ancients, who "fell down before the throne upon their faces and adored, saying: Amen"; the incense rising to the throne—all these magnificent scenes would little by little inspire the liturgical ceremonies of that "breaking of bread," which, by the addition of new rites, would become the solemn Mass, celebrated by a bishop with his priests about him, amidst the smoke of incense, before an altar bearing relics of the saints and often adorned with the very image of the Lamb of God slain for the salvation of men.⁸⁸

These sublime visions and fervent exhortations would make a powerful impression upon the Churches of Asia. Such and such details or allusions, which have become obscure for us, no doubt were living words to the men of that time.

St. Clement of Rome

But the Church is more than a society guided by a common inspiration: it is a hierarchical organization with a supreme authority to regulate its operation and to decide disputes. At the very hour when persecution and heresy were increasing their ravages, a painful quarrel broke out in the Christian community at Corinth. Following certain troubles, the precise cause of which we do not know, some members of the council or presbyters were deposed. In a city like Corinth disorder may assume very serious proportions. The Greek spirit, naturally particularistic and fickle, found it hard to submit to the fundamental law of Christianity, which established its hierarchy on the unity of doctrine and government. Thirty years earlier, St. Paul was obliged to administer a sharp reprimand to the Corinthians, who were saying: "I am of Paul; and I am of Apollo; and I am of Cephas,"⁸⁹ as they

⁸⁸ See *Dict. d'archéol. chrét.*, under the word "*Agneau*." Cf. Olier, *Cérémonies de la grand'-messe*, bk. 6, chap. 2. The Office of All Saints takes its whole inspiration from the Apocalypse.

⁸⁹ See 1 Cor. 1:12.

might have said: "I belong to the Porch, or to the Lyceum, or to the Academy." The schism threatened to rend the Church. To prevent this, there was need for something besides the exhortations of a doctor or prophet; the situation called for the decision of a supreme chief and sovereign judge. This is why recourse was had to the successor of the Apostle Peter, to Clement of Rome.

The Roman Pontiff wrote them a letter wherein, along with an admirable spirit of prudence, there appears the consciousness of undeniable authority.

He begins by excusing himself for not having intervened sooner. He says: "Owing to the sudden and repeated misfortunes and calamities which have befallen us, we consider that our attention has been somewhat delayed in turning to the questions disputed among you."⁹⁰ This is evidently a reference to the persecution of Domitian. Then the head of the Roman Church enters clearly upon the capital question: the necessity of humble submission to the order established by God in all things, and principally in His Church. "Let us be humble-minded, brethren, putting aside all arrogance and conceit. . . . Let not the wise man boast himself in his wisdom. Let him boast in the Lord, to seek Him out and to do judgment and righteousness."⁹¹ But to be just and righteous is to bow before the order and harmony that God has established in all things. "The ocean and the worlds beyond it are ruled by the same injunctions of the Master. The seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter give place to one another in peace. . . . All these things did the great Creator and Master of the universe ordain to be in peace and concord."⁹²

⁹⁰ Clement, *First Epistle*, I, 1. The opening salutation does not bear the name of the Church of Rome; but no critic questions that the author was Pope Clement.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, XIII, 1.

⁹² *Ibidem*. XX, 8-11.

This comparison, taken from the harmony of the physical world, which the Greeks called the *Kosmos*, or order *par excellence*, was particularly well chosen. Clement pushes his argument farther. He takes his analogies from the human body and the social organization. "Let us take our body; the head is nothing without the feet; likewise the feet are nothing without the head."⁹³ He recalls that, in the Old Testament, God, the direct author of the Law, instituted a hierarchy composed of four degrees: the laity, the Levites, the priests, and the high priest.⁹⁴ "The Apostles received the gospel from the Lord Jesus Christ, who was sent from God. They appointed their first converts to be bishops and deacons."⁹⁵ The bishop of Rome in fine compares the ecclesiastical discipline to military discipline. "Let us consider those who serve our generals. . . . Not all are prefects nor tribunes nor centurions nor in charge of fifty men, or the like, but each carries out in his own rank the commands of the emperor and of the generals."⁹⁶ We know how inclined St. Paul was to use these military comparisons.⁹⁷ But Christians are something more than an army. Clement says they are also "the flock of Christ,"⁹⁸ or, better still, "the members of Christ."⁹⁹ The flock should be at peace under the safekeeping of the presbyters;¹⁰⁰ the members of Christ's body should not be torn asunder.¹⁰¹

The consequences that follow from these principles are solid and clear. "Let no one rebel against correction."¹⁰² . . .

⁹³ *Ibidem*, xxxvii, 5.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, xl, 5.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, xlii, i, 4.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, xxxvii, 2 f.

⁹⁷ See 2 Cor. 10:3-6; Ephes. 6:10-18; 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:3.

⁹⁸ Clement, *First Epistle*, liv, 2.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, xlvi, 7.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, liv, 2.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*, xlvi, 7.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*, lvi, 2.

Let all submit to the presbyters.¹⁰³ . . . Let the offerings be made and the ceremonies be performed, not according to each one's pleasure and without order, but as the Master commands and at fixed hours."¹⁰⁴ The pontiff sums up the whole instruction, saying: "Let us put aside empty and vain cares, and let us come to the glorious and venerable rule of our tradition."¹⁰⁵ The letter closes with these lines, in a spirit of calm but firm authority: "You will give us joy and gladness if you are obedient to the things which we have written through the Holy Spirit, and root out the wicked passion of your jealousy. . . . We have sent faithful and prudent men, who have lived among us without blame from youth to old age, and they shall be witnesses between you and us. We have done this that you may know that our whole care has been and is directed to your speedy attainment of peace."¹⁰⁶

"Whether we consider this spontaneous act of Rome in itself or whether we weigh the terms of the letter, we cannot escape the impression that, as early as the end of the first century of the Christian era, *i. e.*, about fifty years after her foundation, the Roman Church was conscious of possessing supreme and exceptional authority, which she will never cease hereafter to claim. . . . But how did the Corinthians receive the exhortations and the messengers of the Church of Rome? So well, that St. Clement's Epistle was placed by them almost on a level with the Holy Scriptures. Seventy years later¹⁰⁷ it was still read on Sundays in the assemblies of the faithful."¹⁰⁸

By the fulness and reliability of its teaching, St. Clement's letter deserved the honors given it in the first centuries. Al-

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*, LVII, I.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, XL, 2.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, VII, 2.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, LXIII, 2-4.

¹⁰⁷ See Dionysius of Corinth, in Eusebius, *H. E.*, IV, xxiii.

¹⁰⁸ Duchesne, *The Churches Separated from Rome*, p. 85.

though it recalls the truths of the faith only in passing and insofar as they are related to the practical purpose of the letter, those truths are a sort of portrayal of the Christian beliefs in their main lines. The author appeals in turn to God's supreme authority and His creative power, to His providence, and to His love.¹⁰⁹ The last judgment, Heaven, and the resurrection of the dead are presented as the final end of man;¹¹⁰ Christ, as man's divine model. The Son of God, equal to the Father and the Spirit by His divine nature, became man like us to save us by His death.¹¹¹ Through Him, our high priest and our advocate with God the Father, man, aided by grace and making his faith fruitful by his works, has hope of being saved.¹¹²

In testimony of the bonds, which in the Church have ever united the law of belief and the law of prayer,¹¹³ dogma and liturgy, the Pontiff inserts in his letter a solemn formula of prayer which we may regard, if not as the official formula of liturgical prayer of that time, at least as a specimen of the way the celebrants developed the subject of Eucharistic prayer:

"Thou dost humble the pride of the haughty, thou dost destroy the imaginings of nations . . . thou dost slay and make alive . . . and art God of all flesh . . . thou dost multiply nations upon earth and hast chosen out from them all those that love thee through Jesus Christ thy beloved child. . . . We beseech thee, Master, to be our help and succor. . . . Feed the hungry, ransom our prisoners, raise up the weak. . . . O merciful and compassionate, forgive us our iniquities and unrighteousness, and transgressions and shortcomings. Reckon not every sin of thy servants and handmaids. . . . Give concord and peace to us and to all that dwell on the earth. . . . Thou, Master, hast given the power of sovereignty to them [our rulers and

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Clement, *First Epistle*, chaps. 19, 23, 29, 35.

¹¹⁰ Cf. chaps. 5, 24, 25, 26, 50.

¹¹¹ Cf. chaps. 2, 7, 12, 31, 32, 35, 49.

¹¹² Cf. chaps. 7, 8, 16, 17, 18, 32, 33, 35.

¹¹³ According to the well-known formula, *lex orandi, lex credendi*.

governors]. . . . And to them, Lord, grant health, peace, concord, firmness. . . . Direct their counsels according to that which is good and pleasing before thee. . . . O thou who alone art able to do these things and far better things for us, we praise thee through Jesus Christ, the high priest and guardian of our souls, through whom be glory and majesty to thee, both now and for all generations and for ever and ever. Amen." ¹¹⁴

Such is the beautiful prayer that ascended to God from the Christian assemblies of Rome, like a hymn of serene peace and unspeakable purity, after Domitian's persecution, in the midst of that "corrupted and corruptive" society, whose baseness and cruelty are recounted by the pens of Tacitus and Suetonius.¹¹⁵

Cerinthus

The fall of the Flavians was followed by a conservative reaction, from which the Christians profited. At Domitian's death, in 96, St. John returned from exile to Ephesus. There he had the consolation of being again in the society of Christians in which he had lived for about thirty years. This whole crowd of converts, some from the ranks of Judaism, some from paganism, were all more or less imbued with the same philosophical ideas that issued from Alexandria. The educated discussed abstract systems that were venturesome and obscure. Even the common people spoke the language of those ideas; and by that unfelt influence which descends from the heights of speculative science little by little into the practice of life, curious theories insinuated themselves into the popu-

¹¹⁴ Clement, *First Epistle*, chaps. 59 to 61. This letter was widely known and greatly venerated in Christian antiquity. But it seems to have been neglected in the West from the fourth century onward. In the Middle Ages it was altogether unknown. In the seventeenth century it was partly recovered in the famous *Codex Alexandrinus*. Bryennios, in 1875, reconstructed the entire text. The beautiful prayer, quoted above, forms a part of recently discovered fragments.

¹¹⁵ "*Corrumpere et corrumpi sæculum vocatur.*" (Tacitus, *Germany*, 19.)

lar beliefs. Some people were making a distinction between Christ and Jesus, regarding the latter as a mere man, like other men. This theory had been taught especially by a certain mysterious personage, Cerinthus, whose life is almost entirely unknown to us. His views are recorded by St. Irenaeus.¹¹⁶ Cerinthus seems to have been a native of Egypt. He was a Jew before his conversion. After becoming a Christian, he kept his narrow views, refusing to admit the catholic character of Christianity. If we are to accept St. Epiphanius' report,¹¹⁷ Cerinthus organized even around St. Paul a sort of opposition preaching for the purpose of maintaining the Christian religion in strict dependence on Judaism. But the Judaism to which Cerinthus held was that interpreted by Philo—a synthesis of pagan wisdom and Mosaic teaching. After travelling through Palestine, Syria, and Galatia, Cerinthus returned to Asia. He may have settled at Ephesus during St. John's exile. Here is a brief outline of his teaching: So far is the supreme God raised above all things, that even the angels do not know Him. He is neither the Creator nor Lawmaker of the world. This function belongs to the angels. As for Jesus, He is the son of Joseph and Mary. At His baptism, a power of the supreme God descended upon Him and remained in Him until the Passion exclusive. This divine entity was the Christ. The power of the supreme God left Him during His Passion, but nevertheless He rose from the dead.¹¹⁸

Did Cerinthus confine himself to teaching by word of mouth, or did he put his ideas in writing? Contemporary evidence is too vague on this point to allow us to decide. We know that he made devoted disciples among the Christians.

¹¹⁶ St. Irenaeus, *Haereses*, I, xxvi, 1.

¹¹⁷ St. Epiphanius, *Haereses*, xxviii, 2-4.

¹¹⁸ St. Irenaeus, III, xi, 7. On Cerinthus, cf. *idem*, I, xxvi, 1; Tertullian, *De praescr.*, 48.

Upon St. John's return to Ephesus, the heresy of the Cerinthians was a great peril for the Church. Polycarp relates that John, the disciple of the Lord, one day entered a bath at Ephesus and there saw the heresiarch; thereupon John ran out, crying: "Let us fly lest the baths fall in, since Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within."¹¹⁹

Besides Cerinthus were there any forerunners of Docetism—later propounded by Saturninus, Basilides, Valentinus, and Marcion—the error which holds that Jesus Christ had only an apparent body? Or did Cerinthus himself teach this heresy? It is impossible to say. But several passages of St. John's writings seem to have such a doctrine in mind.¹²⁰

However this may be, to refute the false notions that were circulating about the adorable person of the Savior, nothing could equal the testimony of him who had known the Master intimately, who had rested his head upon His breast the night before He died, and who had heard His last words on Calvary. St. John addressed to the Christians of Asia Minor, who had been converted from paganism, a letter which may be considered as a preface to the Gospel which he wrote later. This letter begins thus:

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life. . . . That which we have seen and have heard, we declare unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship may be with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."¹²¹

The Gospel of St. John

These words indicate the aim of the Fourth Gospel: to show, as against the new heretics, the identity of Jesus of

¹¹⁹ Eusebius, *H. E.*, IV, xiv, 6.

¹²⁰ John 1:14; 19:34; 1 John 1:1; 4:3; 2 John 7.

¹²¹ 1 John 1:1.

Nazareth with the eternal Son of God, the life and light of the world. The first three Gospels had given a glimpse of the eternal preëxistence of Jesus Christ.¹²² St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Colossians, and later in the Epistle to the Hebrews, represented Christ as the sole revealer and sole mediator of the invisible Father.¹²³ St. John's originality consisted in this, that, in the light of more intimate recollections and deeper supernatural illuminations, he made Christian revelation more precise on these points; and that, in his exposition, he ventured to use the abstract expressions of Oriental language, expressions that were common in the country where he was writing.

Soon afterward St. John's Gospel appeared. It begins thus: "In the beginning was the Word, and Word was with God, and the Word was God." This term "Word" or "Logos" was in common use by the Alexandrian philosophers. But we would be quite mistaken if we therefore concluded that the Evangelist's thought is at all dependent upon a particular philosophy. In the philosophy of Philo the word "Logos" means vaguely an organ of the divine power, although we cannot exactly say whether it is confounded with God or constitutes a distinct person; for other philosophers, this word signified either a being intermediate between the world and God, or divine reason spread forth in the world, or something entirely different. The Logos, for the Hellenists of the time, was the favorite word to express whatever is beautiful and harmonious and great. We may form an idea of this by considering what the eighteenth century philosophers put under the name of Reason, those of the nineteenth under the name of Science, those of the twentieth under the name of Life. The Apostle seized upon this word—he uses it only four times in all his writings—and declares to that Alexandrian world,

¹²² Mark 12: 35-37; Matt. 22: 41-46; Luke 20: 41-44.

¹²³ Coloss. 1: 13-20; Heb. 1: 2 f.; 7: 6; 9: 15; 12: 24. Cf. 1 Cor. 8: 6.

seduced by all the grand things which that term suggested to them, that its ideal is fully realized only in this Jesus, whose witness he (John) is.¹²⁴ And the Evangelist makes the idea of the Word, or Logos, more precise by means of the two clearer words, light and life. "The Word was with God. . . . In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."¹²⁵

The wonderful prologue containing these words so far surpasses the ordinary conceptions of the human mind as to dazzle and astound it. "This son of thunder does not speak a human language; he flashes lightning, he thunders, he stuns, he humbles every created mind under the obedience of the faith, when, by a rapid flight, cleaving the air and piercing the clouds and rising above the angels, he intones these words: 'In the beginning was the Word.'"¹²⁶

Once the theologian has set forth the grand concept we should have of Jesus Christ, the part of the witness begins. St. John's aim in writing his Gospel is evidently to prove the faith; but he wishes to prove it by history, chiefly by that which he knows in a more personal way. He is not at pains to harmonize his account with that of the preceding Evangelists. "As a rule John records the events in the order of their happening; and nevertheless it is possible to note a progressive movement in the march of ideas, which warrants the division of the Holy Book into three parts. The first recounts the various greetings accorded by the world to the Light bestowed on it by the Incarnate Word;¹²⁷ the second describes the implacable resistance it met with from the creatures of Darkness;¹²⁸ the third describes the eclipse of the

¹²⁴ On the comparison of Philo's Logos with the Logos of St. John, see Lebreton, *Les Origines du dogme de la Trinité*, I, 515-523.

¹²⁵ Anyone who will consult a Concordance, under the words "light" and "life," will be impressed with the important place which these two ideas hold in St. John's Gospel.

¹²⁶ Bossuet, *Elévations sur les mystères*, Seventh elevation.

¹²⁷ John, chaps. 1-4.

¹²⁸ John, chaps. 5-12.

Light, but only an apparent eclipse, since from it Jesus emerges in a more striking manifestation of His Divinity: His love attaining its climax in the Eucharist and the sacrifice on the Cross.¹²⁹ None but God could have loved so greatly as this."¹³⁰

The Fourth Gospel seems to flow in a single stream. The events and discourses connect, explain, and supplement each other in a magnificent unity. Everything in it is lifelike and glowing; the events are intermingled with dialogue and animated retort, with realistic interruptions; the actors of the story seem to live again in its pages. Even the abstract ideas take on a body, and the most material events evoke supernatural realities. The Savior's features appear more lifelike than in the Synoptic Gospels; the inner depths of His soul are more clearly revealed. The Apostle, writing his narrative after a long interval, "recording conversations and discourses that he did not write down on the spot, subjects these conversations and discourses to certain literary transformations," by giving them "a personal stamp of his own in the construction of phrases and the grouping of ideas."¹³¹ Yet it is quite natural to think that the beloved disciple was able to attain to deeper realities than the other Evangelists, either by the more intimate confidences which his divine Friend may have bestowed on him, or because a more ardent love made it easier for him to understand and remember, or because a half-century of intense mystical life revealed to him more clearly a saying at first imperfectly understood.¹³²

¹²⁹ John, chaps. 12-20. The last chapter, undoubtedly added as an afterthought, presents a somewhat different point of view.

¹³⁰ Fouard, *St. John*, p. 176.

¹³¹ Lepin, art. "*Evangelies*," in the *Dict. apol. de la foi catholique*.

¹³² Fouard (*St. John*, p. 175) admits as probable that other hands coöperated with St. John in the editing of his recollections. Calmes (*Comment se sont formés les Evangiles*, pp. 5-7, and *L'Evangile selon saint Jean*, Introduction) is willing to consider rather broadly the part of St. John's disciples in the editing of his Gospel. But, on any supposition, these authors maintain that the whole Gospel re-

The appearance of St. John's Gospel was one of the greatest events in the early Church. It occurred about the year 98.¹³³ The Evangelist accomplished his purpose. "Without any direct controversy or specific mention of the heresy, by a simple mention of the opposite facts,"¹³⁴ which he himself had witnessed, he reduced to nothing all the affirmations of Cerinthus. Thereafter, in the teaching of the faithful, the influence of this book was immense. Eusebius says: "It is read in all the churches under heaven."¹³⁵ Some heretics tried to make it serve their own purpose; others fought it with all their might. Especially in Alexandria it occasioned many metaphysical speculations. Eusebius speaks of "a school of sacred learning" or *didascalía*, founded in Alexandria at an early date.¹³⁶ This was the germ of the famous school on which Clement of Alexandria and Origen shed such incomparable luster. It was the beginning of a new phase in the history of the Church. In Jerusalem, Christianity appears as a brotherhood, with St. James the Less as its father; at Antioch it appears as a propaganda, with St. Paul as its chief champion; at Rome it declares itself as a government, with St. Peter as the head; at Alexandria it presents itself as a

produces the Apostle's thought. Even with this restriction, the hypothesis admitted by Fouard and Calmes seems to us improbable. The perfect unity of plan and style to be observed in the Fourth Gospel does not easily comport with the supposition of a plurality of collaborators; unless these latter be regarded as simple scribes, passive secretaries, solely engaged in rendering with scrupulous care the thoughts and expressions of the Apostle—which would fundamentally be a return to the traditional thesis. (On the history of the Fourth Gospel, see Levesque, *Nos quatre évangiles*.)

¹³³ Probably the Apostle had begun to write his Gospel during his exile at Patmos, or even earlier, and it was merely the reproduction and orderly arrangement of his habitual preaching.

¹³⁴ Döllinger, *The First Age of Christianity and the Church*, I, 192.

¹³⁵ Eusebius, *H. E.*, III, xxiv, 2. On the Gospel of St. John, see Corluy, *Commentarium in Evangelium S. Joannis*; Knabenbauer, *ibidem*; Lepin, *La Valeur historique du quatrième Évangile*; Nouvelle, *L'Authenticité du quatrième Évangile*.

¹³⁶ Eusebius, *H. E.*, V, x, 1.

philosophy, with St. John as its doctor. These were, however, merely diverse aspects, successive adaptations, of a doctrine always one, always identical: for it to enlarge and develop was simply to succeed in fathoming the Master's teaching more and more deeply.

The story of St. John's last years has not been recorded; it is lost in fanciful legend, with which the Gnostics embellished it. What we can accept as a truthful detail is the continuance of his amiable kindness. All the traditions represent him as a kindly man advanced in years, summing up all his teaching in one saying: "My little children, let us love not in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth."¹³⁷ These same traditions are agreed in saying that his death was as gentle as falling asleep.¹³⁸ His tomb soon became an object of universal veneration. Today, upon the ruins of the city of Ephesus, it is thought that traces of it are to be found on the side of a hill where eight or ten poor families are living together; and the memory of the great Apostle survives in the name of the little village which these families have founded, Aya Suluk, the place of the "Holy Theologian" (*aghion apostolou*).¹³⁹

¹³⁷ See 1 John 3:18.

¹³⁸ Zahn, *Acta Johannis*, p. 256.

¹³⁹ Le Camus, *Voyage aux pays bibliques*, III, 132 ff.

CHAPTER VI

The Church and the Barbarians

WE have clear and precise documents in abundance regarding the evangelization of the great centers—Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Ephesus, and Alexandria. But, for the history of Christian origins among most of the peoples far removed from these famous centers, the documents are scanty and obscure. In default of written texts, we must rely mostly on inferences, conjectures, more or less ancient traditions, and legends containing an odd mixture of truth. Tradition, as well as writing, is good evidence, and “what is engraved on the altar by public worship and in the heart by prayer is more enduring than marble or bronze.”¹ Besides, if we have a mere probability that a witness of the first centuries, a man of the Apostolic age, evangelized a district or shed his blood there, would not this be enough for Christian people to venerate the least traces of that evangelization or martyrdom?

Evangelization by the Apostles

A highly respectable tradition tells us that the twelve Apostles “planted the Church in their blood.”² Where did they suffer martyrdom? Thus far, besides the names of Paul and Barnabas, who were apostles in the broad sense of the word, we have met only the names of Peter, John, the two Jameses, and Philip. What and where were the labors of their brethren in the apostolate? Did they go beyond the regions of which we have been speaking?

¹ Lacordaire, *Sainte Madeleine*, chap. 6.

² “*Isti sunt qui, viventes in carne, Ecclesiam plantaverunt sanguine suo*”; responsorium of the third nocturn of the Common of Apostles.

Eusebius says that "Thomas, as tradition relates, obtained by lot Parthia."³ St. Jerome supposes that he evangelized Persia also,⁴ and Rufinus says he was buried at Edessa,⁵ where St. John Chrysostom mentions his tomb. "It is one of the four Apostolic tombs that are known: the others are the tombs of Peter, Paul, and John."⁶ Another tradition has it that he preached the faith and was martyred in India.⁷ This statement seems to be corroborated by an archeological monument, the Oodeypore inscription, in eastern India,⁸ and by the fact that the Hindu Christians, known as "Christians of St. Thomas," have honored this Apostle from time immemorial as the founder of their Church. It seems, however, that their founder was a Nestorian missionary named Thomas, and that they have pushed back the date of his preaching to Apostolic times, so as to glory in a more ancient beginning.⁹ The only fact emerging with certainty from all these different reports is that St. Thomas the Apostle exercised the apostolate in regions beyond the eastern and southern frontiers of the Roman Empire; regions which at that time went under the vague designation of India. According to the tradition accepted by the Roman Martyrology, the Apostle was pierced with a lance by order of a persecuting king, and his body was transported to Edessa. The legendary details in the *Acta sancti Thomae* are not trustworthy because this writing bears evident traces of Gnosticism.¹⁰

³ Eusebius, *H. E.*, III, i; cf. Socrates, *H. E.*, I, xix; *Clementine Recognitions*, IX, xxix.

⁴ St. Jerome, *De vitis apostolorum*, 5.

⁵ Rufinus, *H. E.*, II, v.

⁶ St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. 26 in Heb.*, 2.

⁷ St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes adversus Arianos*, 33, 11.

⁸ *Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung*, Munich, January 8, 1900, p. 7.

⁹ Art. "Thomas," in Vigouroux' *Dict. de la Bible*.

¹⁰ The best edition of the *Acta sancti Thomae* is that of Max Bonnet, 1884. According to Lipsius, this work dates from the close of the third century. (Lipsius, *Die Apokryphen Apostelgeschichten*, I, 346.)

There is greater uncertainty regarding the nations evangelized by St. Matthew after his departure from Palestine. Clement of Alexandria simply says that Matthew preached the Gospel to the Hebrews for fifteen years, and then went to convert the pagans.¹¹ St. Gregory the Great and the historian Socrates say he went to Ethiopia,¹² and this is the tradition adopted by the Roman Breviary.¹³ But St. Isidore of Seville and Simeon Metaphrastes state that he devoted himself to the evangelization of the Parthians.¹⁴ As to his martyrdom, the details given in the *Acta sancti Matthaei* are not reliable.¹⁵

Even vaguer is the information about the apostolate of St. Matthias, whom some of the Fathers confuse with St. Matthew.¹⁶ One tradition has him stoned to death by the Jews in Judea; there is another and more probable tradition which says that he preached the gospel in Ethiopia and was martyred there.¹⁷

All the authors who speak of St. Bartholomew agree in saying that he evangelized India. But, in the vast region designated by that term, where are we to locate the exact district to which he went? The view adopted by the Roman Breviary is that it was Armenia. It is said that he was there flayed alive and crucified by order of Astyages, whose brother Polymius, king of Armenia, he had converted.¹⁸ St. Simon and St. Jude, according to the Roman Breviary, together evangelized Mesopotamia, where they were martyred.¹⁹ They

¹¹ Clement of Alexandria, *Pedagogus*, II, i.

¹² St. Gregory the Great, *In I Regum* 4: 13; Socrates, *H. E.*, I, xix.

¹³ Roman Breviary, September 21.

¹⁴ St. Isidore of Seville, *De ortu et obitu Patrum*, 76; Metaphrastes, *Vita S. Matthaei*, IV, 5.

¹⁵ In Tischendorf's *Acta apostolorum apocrypha*, pp. 167-189. Cf. the Bollandists' *Acta sanctorum*, September, VI, 194-227.

¹⁶ E. g., Clement of Alexandria.

¹⁷ *Acta sanctorum*, February, III, p. 444.

¹⁸ See Tillemont, *Mémoires*, I, 387.

¹⁹ Roman Breviary, October 28.

are also said to have preached the gospel in Persia, and St. Simon in Egypt. That this Apostle preached in other parts of Africa and in Britain, is considered purely legendary by the Bollandists.²⁰

The Acts of the Apostles mentions the name of Andrew only in the list of the Apostles, and the Epistles do not speak of him at all. The tradition recorded by Eusebius²¹ and Nicephorus²² says that, after the dispersion, he crossed Capadocia, Galatia, Bithynia, and Colchis, to mysterious Scythia, north of the Black Sea, between the Don and the Danube, where he disappeared in the darkness of the barbarian world, quietly introducing the Christian faith in the southern provinces of the future empire of the czars, until, after fulfilling his mission as apostle to the Scythians, he returned through Thrace to the Greco-Roman world, coming down through Macedonia and Epirus as far as Achaia, where he died.²³ Andrew was arrested and condemned to death in the heart of the Hellenist world, at Patras in Achaia, near the Strait of Lepanto. Before him he saw the X-shaped cross on which he was to be put to death: he greeted it in words which the Church has inserted in her liturgy, to remind her ministers what should be the sentiments of a true apostle of Christ: "O lovable cross, O cross so eagerly wished for and at last so happily found, may I never quit thee, that He who redeemed me by thee, by dying on thy arms, may by thee also receive me and keep me forever in His love."²⁴ Bossuet calls

²⁰ *Acta sanctorum*, October 29, XII,

²¹ Eusebius, *H. E.*, III, i.

²² Nicephorus, *H. E.*, II, xxxix-xliv.

²³ Gondal, *Au temps des apôtres*, p. 320.

²⁴ The arrest, interrogation, condemnation, and martyrdom of St. Andrew are related in the celebrated Letter of the Priests and Deacons of Achaia on the Martyrdom of St. Andrew (Tischendorf, *Acta apostolorum apocrypha*, p. 155). The authenticity of the letter is defended by the best critics: Noël Alexander, Galland, etc. Tillemont questions its integrity. In places it seems to be an oratorical amplification of details taken from authentic documents. No reliance is to be placed on

Andrew "the first-born of the Apostles,"²⁵ because he was the first to bring disciples to Jesus, notably his brother Simon Peter; he was thus chosen by God to give the world an example of triumphant heroism in the face of martyrdom. Not only did the twelve poor fishermen of Galilee, through their preaching, give the world their Gospels and their Epistles, the loftiest lessons mankind has ever heard, but they also gave the finest examples of conduct ever seen. "When God wishes to show that a work is entirely that of His own hand, He reduces all to powerlessness and despair, and then He acts."²⁶

Beginnings of the Church in Spain

If to these labors of the twelve Apostles we add what we know or can reasonably surmise of St. Paul's labors, we understand how St. Ignatius of Antioch, at the beginning of the second century, was able to write in significant terms—though they should not be taken literally—that the Church had spread "to the limits of the earth."²⁷ St. Clement of Rome declares that the Apostle of the Gentiles was not put to death until after "he had reached the limits of the West."²⁸ It is natural to suppose these words refer to Spain. We may wonder why St. Paul, at the time of his Epistle to the Romans (A. D. 60), speaks only of Spain, and not of Gaul and Africa. Perhaps the reason was that Gaul and Africa had already received the true faith. "When we know how reluctant St. Paul was to go and preach where other Apostles had preceded him,"²⁹ we

The Adventures of Matthias and Andrew in the Country of the Cannibals (Tischendorf, *op. cit.*, p. 132). See Flamion, *Les Actes apocryphes de l'apôtre André*, Louvain and Paris, 1911.

²⁵ Bossuet, *Panegyrique de saint André*, 2d point.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ St. Ignatius, *Romans*, 3.

²⁸ Clement, *First Epistle*, v, 7.

²⁹ Rom. 15:20.

are led to suppose that cities like Carthage or Marseilles may have received the gospel even before the year 60. In the Second Epistle to Timothy we read: 'Crescens [is gone] into Gaul, Titus into Dalmatia.'³⁰ For in this passage, we should read 'Gaul' rather than 'Galatia,' however slender may be this preference."³¹ In a word, at the close of the first century, seventy years after the Savior's death, it appears that not only has Europe been traversed from end to end, from east to west, but Asia and Africa have been penetrated far beyond the frontiers of the Empire. Harnack enumerates forty-one localities where the existence of Christian communities is historically attested in the course of the first century.³² We know these communities formed only a very small minority in the Church. Even the Epistles of St. Paul and of St. Peter witness to the presence of many such communities which they do not name; those founded by the other Apostles are even less known. The miracle of Pentecost was verified in a new sense: "Men out of every nation under heaven . . . heard them speak in their own tongue," and St. Clement of Rome was able to ask in his prayer, "that the Creator of the Universe may guard unhurt the number of His elect that has been numbered in all the world."³³

³⁰ 2 Tim. 4: 10.

³¹ Batiffol, in the *Revue biblique*, April 1895, p. 140. The interpretation of 2 Tim. 4: 10, in the sense of Gaul is much disputed. The words Celtia, Galatia, and Gallia appear to have been synonymous in the language of the period. Only the circumstances can determine whether Gaul or Galatia is meant.

³² Harnack, *Expansion of Christianity*, II, 91.

³³ St. Clement, *First Epistle*, LIX, 2; Funk, *Patres apostolici*, I, 175. Cf. Batiffol, "*L'Extension géographique de l'Eglise*," in the *Revue biblique*, April 1895; Grandmaison, "*L'Expansion du christianisme*," in *Etudes*, July 1903; Rivière, "*La Propagation du christianisme dans les trois premiers siècles*," in the *Revue pratique d'apologétique*, March 15 and April 1, 1906; Allard, *Ten Lectures on the Martyrs*, Lecture 2, "The Spread of Christianity Outside the Roman Empire." Was the condition of the ancient world favorable or unfavorable to the spread of Christianity? A great part of the discussion that has arisen over this question rests upon an equivocal statement of the problem. The question can be answered exactly only by a distinction. Whereas, in the ancient world, everything seems to have been

It is no less noteworthy that the geographical spread of Christianity was duplicated by a deep penetration of its spirit into society. This is what Harnack calls its "intensive penetration." Since the day when St. Paul wrote: "There are not many wise according to the flesh among you,"³⁴ the Church had made many a conquest in the social and intellectual aristocracy. At Athens it won a member of the Areopagus, at Rome under Nero it counted members in Caesar's household,³⁵ and under Domitian among the members of the imperial family. We know also that the Christians of Alexandria did not hesitate to enter upon the philosophical discussion of their faith. By Alexandria the whole eastern civilization would be penetrated with Christianity. By Athens and Rome the two great nations of Western antiquity would transmit to Europe the spirit of the gospel. And can we say further that two of

providentially disposed to facilitate the rapid spread of Christian doctrine, yet everything appears to have been prepared by the spirit of evil to hinder its acceptance. The unity of the civilized world under a single ruler, the universality of the Greek language, the spread of the Jews, depositaries of a monotheistic faith and of the Messianic prophecies, over the whole world, evidently favored the preaching of the Gospel, while the decadence of the traditional religion, the avowed powerlessness of the philosophical sects, the lassitude engendered by the very excesses of civilization, inclined men's minds to listen to a new preaching. But the powerful unity of the Empire, as soon as it would turn; as in fact it did, against the religion of Christ, was capable of creating a most formidable obstacle to it. Wherever the narrow and carnal spirit of the Jews prevailed—as it did almost everywhere—it made them bitter enemies of Christianity. The cultivation of the Greek language and of the ancient authors of Hellas was sure to make contemptible the speech of a few obscure and unlettered Jews. Although the old mythology had few believers, it was already replaced by the worship of Rome and Augustus, by the whole prestige of a national religion, and by those Oriental mysteries with their purification rites that attracted the lofty-minded, and with their sensual practices that so well suited the instincts of the masses. The philosophical sects prepared men's minds for heresies. Pagan Rationalism rebelled against a religion of authority with as great violence as did pagan sensualism against a doctrine of purity and humility. In short, between the worship of Pan—*i. e.*, nature raised and divinized by its own forces—and the worship of Christ, of a God made man and crucified to redeem a fallen world, the opposition was explicit and absolute.

³⁴ 1 Cor. 1:26.

³⁵ Phil. 4:22.

the nations destined to play a preponderant rôle in the history of the West, Spain and France, contained Christian communities even in the first century, and that the Churches of these two countries—that of the “Catholic kingdom” and that of the “most Christian kingdom”—can boast of an Apostolic origin? This question merits the pains of closer study.

Says Duchesne: “St. Paul no doubt took the opportunity to go to Spain, where the first beginnings of Christianity seem to be connected with him.”³⁶ The thought of evangelizing Spain was early in the mind of the great Apostle. “When I shall begin to take my journey into Spain, I hope that as I pass I shall see you,” he wrote from Corinth to the Romans.³⁷ And again: “I will come by you into Spain.”³⁸ This keen desire is explained by the fact that although Spain was slowly and with difficulty conquered by the Roman armies, yet, owing to the natural genius of its inhabitants, it rapidly became one of the most cultivated provinces of the Empire. The renown of the two Senecas, Lucan, Martial, Silius Italicus, and Quintilian, all of them Spaniards, was not dimmed by the glory of a Horace or a Virgil. An inner impulse seemed to urge the humble disciples of Christ to carry the gospel to all points of civilization in the ancient world. St. Paul seems “to have considered the Spanish mission as the height of his career, after which he might end his course, having brought the faith even to those pillars of Hercules which marked the outermost bounds both of the Empire and of the world.”³⁹ Probably he carried out his intention about the year 63, right after his trial before Caesar and his acquittal, following two years spent in Rome. St. Clement of Rome, well situated for acquiring exact information, declares that Paul “reached the

³⁶ Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 43.

³⁷ Rom. 15: 24.

³⁸ Rom. 15: 28.

³⁹ Leclercq, *L'Espagne chrétienne*, p. 26.

limits of the West.”⁴⁰ We naturally regard this expression as equivalent to the “*Hesperia ultima*” of Horace⁴¹ and the “*extremique orbis Iberi*” of Lucan.⁴² St. Jerome says that the Apostle’s journey was by sea.⁴³ In that case he would have landed at Tarragona or Cadiz.

“None of the spots where St. Paul may have founded churches is known to us. If these churches existed, we are ignorant of the treatment they received in Nero’s persecution.”⁴⁴ The Marquesia (Maravesar) inscription in Lusitania, lauding Nero for having “purged the province of brigands and of those who teach a new superstition to mankind,” is apocryphal.⁴⁵ More to be credited is the remark in the Martyrology of Ado, regarding a mission of seven bishops sent to Spain by St. Peter, subsequent to St. Paul’s mission.⁴⁶ The chief of these missionaries, Torquatus, is said to have founded the Church of Acci or Cadiz. A bishop of Cadiz in A. D. 300 presided over the famous Council of Illiberis (Elvira), and probably this bishop owed his preëminence to the honor of being Torquatus’ successor. The soundest proof of the antiquity of the Spanish Church is the very complete organization and development of that Church at the end of the third century, as appears from the Acts of the Council of Elvira.

What is to be said about the coming of the Apostle St. James the Greater to Spain? It seems to be affirmed by a vague text of St. Jerome⁴⁷ and an *Apostolic Catalogue* of

⁴⁰ *First Epistle*, v, 7.

⁴¹ Horace, *Carmina*, I, 36.

⁴² Lucanus, *Pharsalia*, VII, 541. Pliny and Silius Italicus use similar expressions to designate Spain.

⁴³ “*Ad Hispaniam alienigenarum portatus est navibus.*” (St. Jerome, *In Isaiam*, cap. IX.) This voyage would necessitate a call at Marseilles. The journey by land would have brought St. Paul to Arles, Nîmes, and Narbonne.

⁴⁴ Leclercq, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁴⁵ *Corpus inscrip. lat.*, II, 25. Cf. Walsh, *Marmor Hispaniae antiquum*; Leclercq, *loc. cit.*

⁴⁶ Gams, *Die Kirchengeschichte von Spanien*, I, 103-117.

⁴⁷ *In Isaiam*, 12: 42.

dubious authority. But no mention is made of this Apostle by Orosius, Idacius, Martin of Braga, Braulio, John of Biclario, or Isidore of Seville. The Mozarabic Liturgy contains no mention of a special devotion to St. James as founder of the Spanish Church. Moreover, as the Apostles did not leave Jerusalem before the year 42, and as St. James the Greater was put to death that very year, it would seem impossible to allow for his journey to Spain. James could have gone there only in the sense that his relics were taken there. Probably they were transported to Spain at some undetermined date and occasioned the celebrated pilgrimage to St. James of Compostela,⁴⁸ for centuries the most popular pilgrimage in all Christendom.⁴⁹

Apostolic Origin of Christianity in France

More than forty cities of France have claimed the honor of being founded by disciples of Christ or of the Apostles.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ From *Jacomo apostolo*, according to some; others say, from *Campus stellae*, because of a star which in 772 miraculously revealed to Bishop Theodomir the place where the relics of the Apostle would be found.

⁴⁹ Upon the question of St. James' coming to Spain, see Leclercq, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-42. About the middle of the sixteenth century, some people of Biscay, not satisfied with claiming connection with three Apostles—St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. James the Greater—made claim to another title in favor of the antiquity of their Church. In their district they had found a tombstone bearing the name of a certain *Bilella, serva Christi*; thereupon they said that the evangelization of their district was due to St. Bilella, a domestic servant of Christ. (Leclercq, *op. cit.*, p. 40.)

⁵⁰ The chief Apostolic personages who are claimed as founders of the Churches of Gaul are the following: St. Fronto, honored at Perigueux, St. Martial at Limoges, St. George at Le Puy, Sts. Savinianus and Potentianus at Sens, St. Altinus at Orleans, St. Aventinus at Chartres, St. Mansuetus at Toul, St. Sixtus at Rheims, St. Sinicius at Soissons, St. Memmius at Chalons-sur-Marne, St. Florus at Lodeva, St. Genulfus at Cahors, St. Aphrodisius at Beziers, St. Clarus at Albi, another St. Clarus at Nantes, St. Ursinus at Bourges, St. Eutropius at Saintes, St. Julian at Le Mans, St. Crescens at Vienne, St. Santinus at Meaux, St. Taurinus at Evreux, St. Nicasius at Rouen, St. Exuperius at Bayeux, St. Saturninus at Toulouse, St. Gatianus at Tours, St. Austremonius in Auvergne, St. Paul at Narbonne, St. Eutropius at Orange, St. Peregrinus at Auxerre, St. Lucian at Beauvais, St. Gery at Cambrai, St. Spiritus at Bayeux, St. Latiunus at Séz, St. Amator at Autun, St. Rieul at Senlis, St. Restitutus at Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, St. Amadour at

These claims are of unequal worth. A general Church History cannot be expected to discuss them in detail. The same cannot be said of the Provençal tradition, which assigns to Apostolic times the evangelization of Marseilles and the environs of that great city. Because of the celebrity of the disputes which it has raised and because of its own importance, the question of the Apostolic origin of Christianity in Provence requires that we treat it in some detail.

The Martyrology of the Church (December 29) says that the evangelization of Provence by disciples of our Lord was the fountain-head from which "the streams of Christian faith have spread through all Gaul."⁵¹ Is this true? The most unbiased historical researches permit us to answer this question

Cahors, St. Valerius at Treves, etc. Many of these founders are identified with persons who did something in the company of Christ or of the Apostles. Thus St. Amator of Autun is supposed to have been a servant of the Child Jesus and His blessed Mother; St. Martial of Limoges, the child whom the Savior presented as a model of humility; St. Restitutus, the man born blind; St. Gatian, the man with the pitcher, who led the Apostles to the Cenacle; St. Ursinus, the reader at the Last Supper; St. Aphrodisius, the protector of the Holy Family in Egypt; St. Julian is no other than Simon the leper, and St. Amadour the publican Zaccheus. St. Joseph of Arimathea is supposed to have traversed the entire length of France, carrying to England the Holy Grail, or vessel of the Precious Blood which was gathered beneath the cross. Thus we see that, in traditions of very unequal worth, not only southern France lays claim to an Apostolic origin for its Churches, but also northern France. It is, therefore, by forgetting the facts, that some critics have been able to speak humorously of this product of "southern imagination" and of the "claims made by Marseilles and Tarascon." Surely a historian's first duty, after noting the common ground of these local traditions, should be to ask himself whether such an agreement is sufficiently explained by the concurrence of "belfry vanities," or whether, on the contrary, it does not presuppose a genuine primitive tradition, of which these beliefs are merely more or less distorted popular translations. Are not the strangest legends—and their birth is favored quite as much by the mists of the North as by the sunshine of the South—often an index of a great historic fact which explains their origin? "At the basis of legends, there is more history than we think," wrote Ozanam (*Les Poètes franciscains*, p. 466.) Ordinarily even the poets embellish with their fictions only the deep beliefs of the people.

⁵¹ "*Arelate in Gallia, sancti Trophimi, cujus meminit sanctus Paulus ad Timotheum scribens . . . ex cujus praedicationis fonte (ut sanctus Zosimus papa scribit) tota Gallia rivulos fidei recepit.*" (*Martyr. rom.*, 4 Kal. Jan.)

in the affirmative. But, for the sake of clearness and exactness in the conclusions to be drawn from this fact, the historical problem must be divided into three subsidiary questions: that of the Apostolic origin of Christianity in Provence; that of the organization of local churches in Provençal territory; and that of the first apostles of Provence.

Of the Apostolic origin of Christianity in Provence there can scarcely be a doubt. "Aside from any positive evidence," writes Duchesne, "there is a likelihood that the region close to the Rhone was evangelized at an early date. Marseilles enjoyed commercial relations that reached the full extent of the Mediterranean. . . . It is natural to suppose that, among so many vessels which, in the earliest times of Christianity, dropped anchor in the harbor of Marseilles, some there were from which preachers of the gospel landed.⁵² . . . We may consider it as highly probable that, in those same early times, I would even say in the time of the Apostles, at this great port so frequented by Greeks of Asia Minor and by Syrians, there was a little nucleus of Christians. Thence the gospel spread to the interior of the country."⁵³

The inference of the learned critic is fully confirmed by positive archeological evidence. Two monuments that seem to go back to the middle of the second century⁵⁴—an inscription now preserved in the Marseilles museum and a sarcophagus found at La Gayole, within the territory of Aix—show that Christianity was solidly implanted in Provence at that period and may even have had its martyrs there.

The Marseilles inscription (called the inscription of Volusianus)⁵⁵ is, according to Edmond Le Blant, the epitaph of two Christians (Volusianus and Fortunatus), who perished

⁵² Duchesne, *Fastes épiscopaux de l'ancienne Gaule*, I, 75

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 103.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 76.

⁵⁵ A carefully executed copy of this may be seen in Albanès, *Armorial et sigillographie des évêques de Marseille*, p. 4.

by fire—martyrs perhaps.⁵⁶ This inscription, coming from excavations that were made in 1837 in the valley of the Carénage, was classified among the pagan monuments of the Marseilles museum. “There it was,” says Ulysse Chevalier, “that Edmond Le Blant found it in 1849. He drew de Rossi’s attention to it, and the latter saw it himself three or four years later, and perceived that it was a most precious Christian monument.”⁵⁷ The famous Roman archeologist in one of his subsequent writings has, in fact, declared that he regards Volusianus and Fortunatus as two Marseilles martyrs, who suffered death about the same time as the celebrated martyrs of Lyons, and that their eulogy was carved in stone immediately after their martyrdom—a fact that is almost unique in Christian antiquity.⁵⁸ The sarcophagus of La Gayole belongs to the same period.⁵⁹ A comparison of these monuments with similar ones of Gaul leads Le Blant to the following conclusion: “While studying our first Christian inscriptions, I have shown that their distribution throughout all Gaul marks the advance of the new faith. . . . This revolution of souls took place on the shores of Provence, in the southern Rhone valley. . . . This fact is attested by our epigraphic monuments.”⁶⁰

These conclusions are corroborated by other historic facts. “The famous documents quoted or analyzed by Eusebius at the beginning of the fifth book of his *Ecclesiastical History*

⁵⁶ Le Blant, *Catalogue des monuments du musée de Marseille*, pp. 1 ff.

⁵⁷ *Gallia christiana novissima*, p. vii.

⁵⁸ De Rossi, *Inscriptiones christianae Urbis Romae*, II, x. The German scholar, Otto Hirschfeld, shares the view of Le Blant and de Rossi on the antiquity and the Christian character of this inscription. (*Corpus inscriptionum latinarum*, XII, 55.) “The inscription of Volusianus and the sarcophagus of La Gayole possess an antiquity comparable to that of the earliest vestiges of subterranean Rome.” (Jullian, *Revue catholique de Bordeaux*, XIX, 196.) “This opinion,” says Chevalier, “is in conformity with that of the severest critics.” (*Op. cit.*, p. vii.)

⁵⁹ Le Blant, *Les Sarcophages chrétiens de la Gaule*, p. 158.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. xviii; cf. Béranger, *Les Traditions provençales*, pp. 176–187.

bear glorious testimony to the existence and vitality of Christianity in Gaul a century after the death of the Apostles.”⁶¹ A text of St. Irenaeus shows that in his time there were churches in Germany, probably in the Roman provinces of that name on the left bank of the Rhine, and among the Celts: in other words, in the Gallic provinces north and west of Lyons.⁶² To reach there, if Le Blant’s theory is correct, Christianity probably had to be established in the Provençal region; that foundation would therefore go back to a very early date. Our hypothesis finds support in the ancient tradition, frequently cited in history, which always regards the Church of Marseilles as the mother Church of the region.⁶³

The First Christian Communities in Gaul

When we ask when and how the first churches of Gaul were established, the answer is not so clear. We know that in the Apostolic period Marseilles had an important colony of Jews.⁶⁴ It must have been among them that the first Christian community was organized. If St. Paul, on his way to Spain, landed at Marseilles, as we may reasonably suppose, his first preaching would have been, according to his practice, among these Jews. These considerations lead us to conclude that this community was the first to be made into a particular Church, with a bishop at its head. But we have no direct documentary evidence to this effect. Duchesne expresses the opinion that all the scattered Christian groups from the Rhine to the

⁶¹ Duchesne, *Les Origines chrétiennes*, p. 449.

⁶² *Haereses*, I, x, 2.

⁶³ “The bishops of Marseilles had kept a certain authority over what was called the Second Narbonnaise, the district between the lower Rhone valley and the lofty Alpine chain. At the end of the fourth century all the bishops of this region received ordination from the hands of the bishop of Marseilles, who, moreover, considered himself to be the founder of all their sees. This was the old tradition.” (Duchesne, *Les Fastes épiscopaux*, I, 103.)

⁶⁴ Bouche, *Essai sur l’histoire de Provence*, I, 142.

Pyrenees must have formed, until about 250, only one community, subject to a single head, the bishop of Lyons.⁶⁵ But Harnack attacks this conclusion in a notable dissertation, in which he maintains that the Lyons province, in the third century, counted several organized bishoprics.⁶⁶ The French scholar's opinion seems, therefore, in the view of historical criticism, not entirely beyond dispute.

His chief argument is the silence of the episcopal lists of Gaul, none of which, except that of Lyons, goes back to the middle of the second century; but Duchesne himself gives us the elements for focusing this argument. He says: "It is commonly imagined that the churches carefully preserved the lists of their bishops from their very foundation. This is true of certain large churches, like those of Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria. But many others did not attempt to fix these lists, or they let them be altered. . . . At Carthage we find only three or four bishops previous to the fourth century. . . . In the diptychs, or liturgical lists, arbitrary suppressions or additions were often made."⁶⁷

Besides the silence of the episcopal lists, we should consider the silence of the Fathers of the first centuries, notably of St. Irenaeus. When he appeals to tradition against the heretics, he makes no reference to the tradition of the churches of Marseilles and Arles. It is true that, in the extant writings of the Fathers of the first four centuries, we meet no clear allusion to the early churches of Gaul. But we should note that this silence extends to the Christian communities themselves; and the most exacting critics, despite this silence, have no hesitation in admitting, at least as very probable, the

⁶⁵ Duchesne, *op. cit.*, I, 36.

⁶⁶ Harnack, *Expansion of Christianity*, II, 264 ff. Duchesne replies to Harnack in the second edition of his *Fastes épiscopaux*, pp. 43-46.

⁶⁷ Duchesne, *Les Origines chrétiennes*, 2d ed., p. 459. It is true that Duchesne declares that he eliminated all suspect names from the episcopal lists which he uses as a basis for his argument.

existence of Christian communities at Marseilles and its environs from earliest antiquity. As far as concerns the writings of St. Irenaeus—of which only fragments remain—we can understand that, in his argument from tradition, he would content himself with the authority of St. John, whom he knew so well through the intermediary of his master Polycarp.⁶⁸

We are also told that, in the Apostolic age, it was customary to establish episcopal sees only in the very large centers. But were not the cities of Marseilles and Arles of the first importance? ⁶⁹

St. Gregory of Tours attributes the origin of the churches of Gaul to a mission of seven bishops sent thither in the third century.⁷⁰ Duchesne, however, says: "Gregory's evidence about the sending of the seven bishops is too weak and its origin too obscure for it to enter into the woof of history."⁷¹

Lastly, appeal is had to the famous text of Eusebius: "The *parishes* (*paroikion*) of Gaul over which Irenaeus *has supervision* (*epescopei*)."⁷² If the word *epescopei* suggests the idea of episcopacy, the word *paroikion* seems to refer to organized Christian groups. In Eusebius the word *paroikia* often

⁶⁸ See *supra*, p. 147.

⁶⁹ Ausonius, in the fourth century, in his enumeration of the great cities of the Empire, places Arles among those in the first rank. Ahead of it, in Gaul, he places only the city of Treves, which was then the imperial residence. Ausonius, *Carmina*, XIX, 8. Pavia was a much less important city. Yet de Rossi judged that he had found, in an epigraphic monument, proofs of the Apostolic origin of its episcopal see. (See *Bullett. di archeol. crist.*, 1876, p. 77.) De Rossi's conclusions have been contested by Savio, *Gli antichi vescovi d'Italia*, Turin, 1899.

⁷⁰ St. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, II, 20 ff. (bk. 1, chap. 28). On the other hand, St. Gregory in his *De gloria martyrum*, chap. 47, says that St. Saturninus was "*ab apostolorum discipulis ordinatus*," and in chapter 79 of that same work he says that St. Ursinus of Bourges was ordained and sent "*a discipulis apostolorum*." Should we, in agreement with Duchesne, say that these words "can mean no one but the pope" or are we to see a contradiction between these two passages and the passage in the *History of the Franks*? (Duchesne, *Les Fastes épiscopaux*, pp. 20–26.)

⁷¹ Duchesne, *Les Origines Chrétiennes*, p. 451.

⁷² τῶν κατὰ Γαλλίαν δὲ παροικίων ὡς Εὐρηναῖος ἐπεσκόπει; Eusebius, *H. E.*, V, xxiii, 4.

(notably in this chapter 22, which contains the ambiguous phrase) has the meaning of diocese.⁷³

In short, the documents of archeology and the information of history contain nothing that contradicts, in a strict and precise way, the tradition of the Apostolic origin of the episcopal sees in Provence.⁷⁴ But who were the first to occupy those sees?

The First Apostles of Provence

On this last question, we have no hesitation in taking our stand on the conclusions of a historian whose erudition and critical acumen no one will question. Says Ulysse Chevalier: "Who were the first apostles of Marseilles, who was its first bishop? . . . We must first remark that it is a begging of the question to declare that a tradition first appears in the eleventh century—it goes back at least to the tenth century—because earlier documents do not mention it. What documents? we might ask. Provence was ravaged again and again by Saracens and Normans and therefore has a paucity of official documents dating earlier than the ninth century. Not a single one exists among all the *instrumenta* of the province of Aix. These repeated destructions, whether accidental or intentional, have deprived us of a knowledge of facts which fragmentary chronicles or documents with numerous gaps do not enable us to supply. All we can do is to bemoan the lack." ⁷⁵

⁷³ Du Cange, under the word "*Parochia*." Duchesne says: "Here, as often, the phraseology of Eusebius impairs the clearness of his testimony." (*Op. cit.*, p. 450.) In his *Fastes épiscopaux* (2d ed., p. 43), Duchesne, although acknowledging that the word "*paroikia*" has, in the same chapter of Eusebius, the meaning of "diocese," refuses that sense to it in the passage which we are here considering.

⁷⁴ Dr. Marx thinks that "it can be affirmed with very great probability that episcopal sees existed as early as the second century in the chief cities of the southern part of Gaul." (*Manuel d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 1st epoch, chap. I, sect. 18.)

⁷⁵ Chevalier, *Gallia christiana novissima*, Marseilles, p. viii.

Though documents say nothing, regional traditions and local religious practices more than ten centuries old offer their support. The following are the chief data: Fourteen years after our Lord's death, when a religious persecution broke out in Palestine, the following persons boarded a ship without sails: Lazarus, his sisters Mary Magdalen and Martha, their servant Sara, Sidonius, the man who was blind from his birth and who was cured by Christ, the two Marys (the mother of James and Salome), and Maximin, one of the seventy-two disciples. This boat was driven by Providence to the shores of the Camargue. They landed at the mouth of the Rhone, at the spot now occupied by the village of les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer. The two Marys and Sara settled there, and Lazarus went to evangelize Marseilles; Maximin went to Aix; Martha to Avignon and Tarascon. "The blessed Marie Magdalene," says the *Golden Legend*, "desirous of sovereign contemplation, sought a right sharp desert, and took a place which was ordained by the angel of God, and abode there by the space of thirty years without knowledge of anybody. In which place she had no comfort of running water nor solace of trees nor of herbs. And that was because our Redeemer did to show it openly, that He had ordained for her refecton celestial, and no bodily meats. And every day at every hour canonical she was lift up in the air of the angels, and heard the glorious song of the heavenly companies with her bodily ears. Of which she was fed and filled with right sweet meats, and then was brought again by the angels unto her proper place, in such wise as she had no need of corporal nourishing." ⁷⁶

How ancient is this tradition? It is not surprising that we find no trace of it in the writers of the first centuries, since they say almost nothing about the Apostolic origins of Christianity in Provence—origins which archeological monuments

⁷⁶ Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, II, 626.

and historical inference lead us to hold as demonstrated facts. A church dedicated to St. Martha in the seventh century in the city of Tarascon,⁷⁷ the spread of devotion to this saint, which seems to be evidenced by the extensive use of the name "Martha" in the ninth century in the Arles district and the dependencies of the Marseilles bishopric⁷⁸—these are the earliest traces of devotion paid to the holy family of Bethany.

At the same time there appeared in the East traditions that St. Lazarus' tomb was on the island of Cyprus and that of St. Magdalen in the city of Ephesus. But these traditions are not trustworthy;⁷⁹ they appear not to go back to the early centuries, for the famous *Peregrinatio Silviae* (fourth century) makes no mention of them;⁸⁰ and they are probably the result of a confusion in names: it may be that the Lazarus and Magdalen of the Gospel were confused with a holy monk named Lazarus, who died in the island of Cyprus in 822, and a Magdalen who was buried at Ephesus in the fifth century.⁸¹

A third group of traditions appears at Vézelay in Burgundy, where the relics of St. Magdalen became the object of public veneration and of numerous pilgrimages in the eleventh century. Are these traditions and this veneration dependent upon those of Provence, as Bérenger maintains?⁸² Or do the Provençal traditions depend upon those of Burgundy, as

⁷⁷ Manteyer, *La Provence du I^{er} au XII^e siècle*, pp. 60–62. There is every reason to suppose this St. Martha to be the St. Martha of the Gospel; but there is no positive indication of identity. The word "Martha" comes from the Aramaic word "*mara*" (master), and might mean "mistress." Plutarch (*Marius*, 17) cites this name as that of a Syrian prophetess who accompanied General Marius. (Cf. Schegg, *Evangelium nach Lukas*, II, 530.)

⁷⁸ Manteyer, *op. cit.*, p. 62. In Avignon also a church is found dedicated to St. Mary Magdalen in the eleventh century. (*Ibidem*, p. 66.)

⁷⁹ Duchesne says: "I do not vouch for the authenticity of this tomb of Lazarus (in the island of Cyprus), nor for the tomb of Magdalen at Ephesus." (*Les Fastes épiscopaux*, I, 2.)

⁸⁰ Bérenger, *Les Traditions provençales*, p. 54.

⁸¹ This is Bérenger's hypothesis (*op. cit.*, p. 52).

⁸² *Ibidem*, pp. 81–88.

Duchesne holds? ⁸³ Or do both depend upon Auvergne legends, as Georges de Manteyer ⁸⁴ and Dom Germain Morin ⁸⁵ try to prove? With scholars so divided on the question, evidently it is not very clear. We shall merely observe that the Provençal traditions supplanted the others before long. Since the eleventh century it is in Provence that the veneration of St. Lazarus, St. Magdalen, St. Martha, and St. Maximin has continued with undiminished splendor. The "holy places of Provence," as they were called, became places of numerous pilgrimages. They have been visited by many saints and persons of high rank, among whom we mention St. John of Matha, King St. Louis, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Brigid of Sweden, Charles VIII, Louis XII, Anne of Brittany, Louis XIII, and Louis XIV. On one single day there were five kings there; ⁸⁶ a single century brought eight popes thither. ⁸⁷ The founder of seminaries in France in the seventeenth century and the restorer of the Dominican Order in the nineteenth century went there to place their new labors under the protection of the great penitent; the renowned preacher of Notre Dame boasted of venerating "in those holy places which might be thought to belong to Heaven rather than to earth, the last footprint, as it were, of Christ's life in our midst." ⁸⁸

Such are the facts. After an impartial examination of them we can understand that the editors of the *Acta sanctorum*, taking the point of view of strict historical criticism, decline to give their sanction to claims which our present knowledge does not allow us to establish with sufficient certainty. But we

⁸³ Duchesne, *op. cit.*, I, 328-340.

⁸⁴ Manteyer, *op. cit.*

⁸⁵ Morin, *Etudes sur saint Lazare et saint Maximin*, p. 28.

⁸⁶ In 1332: Philip of Valois, king of France; Alphonso IV, king of Aragon; Hugh IV, king of Cyprus; John of Luxemburg, king of Bohemia; Robert, king of Sicily.

⁸⁷ John XXII, Benedict XII, Clement VI, Innocent VI, Urban V, Gregory XI, Clement VII, Benedict XIII. The two last named are considered antipopes.

⁸⁸ Lacordaire, *Sainte Marie-Madeleine* (*Œuvres*, IX, 351).

can also understand how the devout people of Provence, rightly proud of having received the first fruits of the Christian faith on the soil of France, and without ever having had any other patron saints to invoke except these holy friends of the Savior, are unwilling to abandon their veneration, now more than ten centuries old, in the presence of objections of indecisive critical scholarship, and declare they will maintain the old traditions of their district so long as the manifest falsity thereof is not proven.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ It is impossible for us to summarize here the lengthy controversies that have arisen concerning the apostolicity of St. Martial of Limoges, St. Saturninus of Moulouse, St. Austremonius of Auvergne, St. Julian of Le Mans, etc. We shall merely give, with Vigouroux, the results of historic researches with regard to St. Denis of Paris: "The Martyrology and the Roman Breviary (October 9) now identify St. Dionysius the Areopagite with the first bishop of Paris. But the *Vetus Romanum Martyrologium* distinguishes them from each other. (Migne, *P.L.*, CXXIII, cols. 169, 171.) The chronicle that bears the name of Lucius Dexter (d. 444) identifies St. Denis of Paris with Dionysius the Areopagite; but it is commonly acknowledged that this writing is not authentic. The earliest known writer to make one person of St. Dionysius the Areopagite and the first bishop of Paris, is Hilduin (d. 840), abbot of Saint-Denis. (*Vita sancti Dionysii*, in Migne, *P. L.*, CVI, col. 15.) In favor of regarding St. Denis of Paris as the Areopagite, see Freppel, *Saint Irenée*. Against this identification, see *Acta sanctorum*, October, IV, 767." Vigouroux, art. "*Denys l'Aréopagite*," in *Dict. de la Bible*. Once there was a separate feast in honor of each of these two saints, one as bishop of Athens, the other as bishop of Paris. From this liturgical fact it was deduced that St. Denis of Paris and St. Dionysius the Areopagite were two different persons. This argument is answered by Freppel as follows: "It is true that, in some martyrologies, the feast of St. Denis comes twice. But the reason for this fact is quite simple. As the same person had been successively bishop of Athens and bishop of Paris, the Greeks celebrated his memory on October 3, and the Latins on the 9th. Hence the two feasts came together in the same lists, and finally the two persons became only one. This is not the sole instance to be found in the old martyrologies." Freppel. *Saint Irenée*, p. 90. Cf. Darboy, *Œuvres de saint Denys*, Introduction.

PART II

THE CONFLICT

Introductory Remarks

"I CAME not to send peace, but the sword,"¹ the Savior said. No epoch better fulfilled that prophecy than the two centuries following the death of the last Apostle. Persecutions, heresies, schisms, disputes—this is all that a first glance perceives. Under Trajan, Hadrian, Decius, and Diocletian, the formidable might of the Roman Empire was hurled against the early Church. In Lucian, Celsus, and Marcus Aurelius, the old pagan spirit in its subtlest and most deceptive aspects attempted to dissolve or captivate the Christian spirit. In the vast syncretism of all the exalted religious aspirations and all the unbridled instincts, the Gnostic heresy threatened to allure the world in its train. At nearly the same time, Montanism seemed on the point of misleading Christianity into a grim and rebellious asceticism. Further, the schisms of Hippolytus, of Meletius, and of Novatian, the heated controversies about Baptism, penance, and Easter, disturbed the faithful, divided the episcopate, and involved the supreme authority itself.

This is the first view presented by the history of the Church from the death of St. John the Evangelist to the Edict of Milan. Yet a closer look shows that, in this same tragic period, the faith was strengthened. Amidst persecutions, countless martyrs shed their blood with a heroism that most impressively demonstrates the divinity of our religion. The attacks of heresy caused the Church to define her beliefs in formulas by which Christian faith will live thereafter. In the distress.

¹ Matt. 10: 34.

the faithful gathered more closely about their priests and bishops. The latter, in their disputes or doubts, so frequently turned to the sovereign authority of the Roman pontiff that they strengthened the preëminence of that high office. In the face of opponents attacking them in the name of philosophy and science, the Christians showed themselves to be polemics, scholars, and philosophers. Apologetics and theology found expression in works of the highest worth. In fine, when the old religions of antiquity broke down by their own doctrinal and moral insufficiency, the Church, in her powerful vitality, was able to take from their ceremonies, expressive of true religious aspirations, the elements of a liturgy both solemn and impressive.

In short, in the early years of the fourth century, the Edict of Milan and the Council of Nicaea do not, as often is said, so much found an authority or create a dogma, as recognize and confirm a situation that was won in the midst of the conflict.

In the matter of the external persecutions undergone by the Church during this period, we may distinguish three distinct phases. The first embraces the last years of the first century and all of the second century. The simple fact of professing Christianity was a crime; but the simple fact of abjuring it freed an accused person from all prosecution. During the second phase, including the entire third century, the juridical situation of the Christians underwent no basic change, but it grew more insecure. Their lot was subject to the good pleasure of the emperors, who at irregular intervals issued decrees of persecution against them. It was no longer the latent hostility of the earlier time, but open war, preceded by a formal declaration. During the third phase, covering the first twelve years of the fourth century, now that the Roman Empire had several heads, the persecution, general at first, soon became local and was often marked by extreme violence; it

died out or revived according to the provinces and caprice or particular circumstances.²

As to the internal crises which, at the same time as the persecutions, upset the Church by heresy, schism, or controversy, they had three chief sources. The first was that Judaic or Judaizing spirit—narrow, jealous, hemmed in by national perspectives and by temporal hopes—which our Lord encountered during His life on earth. This was the origin of the Ebionites, Nazarenes, Essenes, Elkasaites, and similar Gnostic sects. Paganism, under the many forms it had assumed both in the East and in the West, became another source of heresies by its penetration into Christian society; from a certain point of view, Gnosticism is only a monstrous compromise between Christian truth and pagan errors. The third source of the internal troubles that desolated the Church of the second and third century must be looked for in that spirit of exaggerated individualism and exclusive autonomy which, from Simon Magus to Novatian and Meletius, stirred up so many rebellions, either silent or openly declared, and created so many parties refractory to the law of doctrine and the guidance of the hierarchy.

These are the events we are now to recount, following, so far as possible, a chronological order, from which we will depart only when clearness seems to require it.

² Cf. Allard, *Ten Lectures on the Martyrs*, pp. 80–108.

CHAPTER I

From Trajan to Hadrian (98-138)

The Emperor Trajan

THE peace policy that allowed St. John the Apostle to return to Ephesus, publish his Gospel, and die in peace in a steadily growing Christian community, continued throughout the reign of the Emperor Nerva. The coming of Trajan in 98 seemed at first to consolidate the religious policy of his predecessor. The new ruler's first act was a long letter to the senate, promising not to put to death any righteous man.¹ It was with marked friendliness that Rome received this soldier, son of a soldier, who had won military glory at the age of forty-two, a man of austerity in spite of certain hidden weaknesses,² whose speech was clear, precise, and forceful, notwithstanding his lack of literary culture.³ The old senatorial aristocracy saw itself in this prince, who possessed a robust but short-spoken good sense, a devoted but narrow patriotism, a conservative but not discerning mind, ready to sacrifice everything to the Roman order and the unity of the Empire, but having no care for things of the soul or respect for inner liberties or sense of the delicacies of conscience; in a word, capable of interpreting in a spirit of judicious tolerance the duty of giving to Caesar what is Caesar's, but unable to respect or perhaps even to comprehend the duty of giving to

¹ Xiphilinus, in Champagny, *Les Antonins*, I, 227.

² Tillemont, *Histoire des empereurs*, II, 118.

³ Dio Cassius, LXVII, 7; Aurelius Victor, *Epitome*, 13.

God what is God's. Such was Trajan. Pliny praises him because, after the fifteen years of Domitian's assertion of divinity, he refused to call himself God.⁴ If he had a god, it was that of Roman unity, and as he considered this unity to rest upon the unity of religious worship, it could be foreseen at the outset of his reign that the Christians had every reason to dread the narrowness of his patriotism.

A broader and deeper mind would have understood that Christianity, instead of weakening the necessary foundations of the Empire, was able to strengthen them. Although the Christians were not disposed to give their sovereigns a homage of adoration, they prayed for them with sincere heart and obeyed them loyally. We have already seen the beautiful prayer for the emperor which Pope St. Clement sent to the Christians of Corinth right after Domitian's persecution,⁵ and we are acquainted with the lessons of obedience which St. Paul gave to the Christians of Rome during the tyranny of Nero.⁶ Trajan was not keen enough to see in the Church the "great school of respect,"⁷ which might perhaps have saved the Empire's unity against more real dangers. Like Nero, he saw an enemy where there was an ally; for him Christianity was the *odium generis humani*.

It is probable that there were martyrs in the first years of Trajan's reign;⁸ but the rescript in which the Emperor's policy toward the Christians is expressed was written in 111 or 112. We must pause to consider this imperial act, the principles of which dominated the whole religious policy of the Antonines.

⁴ Pliny, *Letters*, X, 25, 97.

⁵ See *supra*, p. 160.

⁶ See *supra*, p. 113.

⁷ This phrase is Guizot's. "The principles of Christianity, if graven on the heart, would be incomparably more powerful than this false honor of monarchies, these human virtues of republics, and this servile fear of despotisms." (Montesquieu, *Esprit des lois*, bk. 24, chap. 6.)

⁸ Allard, *Histoire des persécutions*, I, 142.

In the fall of 111,⁹ Trajan received from the legate of Bithynia, who was then Pliny the Younger, a long letter, setting forth the embarrassing situation in which the emperor's representative found himself on account of the considerable development of Christianity, and asking of the emperor a regulation for his guidance. The germs of faith sowed in the various provinces of Asia Minor by the preaching of St. Peter and St. Paul had grown extraordinarily. The Christian communities, profiting by the Roman legislation regarding *hetairiae*, or professional and religious corporations, increased everywhere, driving back paganism before them. The temples were deserted; the sale of animals intended for the sacrifices suffered a crisis. Hence arose repeated complaints, which were taken to the legate. Nearly everywhere, in his tours through his province, Pliny found himself in the presence of some of these Christians, of whose doctrine he knew nothing and, furthermore, cared little to know. But he did know that "they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up."

As an upright magistrate, careful to prosecute only crimes enumerated in the law of his country, Pliny judged it not proper to proceed with rigor against such people. But informers intervened, some of them anonymously, in such numbers and so insistently, that the legate had to do something about the matter. Pliny's letter continues: "I judged it so much the more necessary to extract the real truth, with the assistance of torture, from two female slaves, who were styled deaconesses: but I could discover nothing more than de-

⁹ Some authors say 112. From the standpoint of general history, the date is of little importance.

praved and excessive superstition. I therefore adjourned the proceedings, and betook myself at once to your counsel." ¹⁰

In reply to the lengthy communication of the accomplished scholar, Trajan writes with that "imperial brevity" ¹¹ which came to him from his military character and was suited to the giving of commands: "The method you have pursued, my dear Pliny, in sifting the cases of those denounced to you as Christians, is extremely proper. It is not possible to lay down any general rule which can be applied as the fixed standard in all cases of this nature. No search should be made for these people; when they are denounced and found guilty, they must be punished; with the restriction, however, that when the party denies himself to be a Christian, and shall give proof that he is not (that is, by adoring our gods), he shall be pardoned. . . . Informations without the accuser's name subscribed must not be admitted in evidence." ¹²

Tertullian points out the illogical part of this decision. He says: "It forbids the Christians to be sought after as innocent, and yet it commands them to be punished as guilty." ¹³ Its unreasonableness is patent if it is looked at from the point of view of morality. But Trajan, as a jurist of ancient Rome, was scarcely aware of this point of view when reasons of state seemed to be involved. It is true that the Christians did not commit any crime in common law; but simply by not per-

¹⁰ Formerly there was a lengthy controversy between scholars with regard to the authenticity of this letter. It has been denied by Aubé (*Histoire des persécutions*, p. 219), Desjardins ("Les Antonins d'après l'épigraphie," in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, December 1, 1874), and Havet (*Le Christianisme et ses origines*, IV, 425 ff.). But the authenticity of the letter is now universally acknowledged. See Boissier, in the *Revue archéologique*, 1876, p. 114; Renan, *Les Evangiles*, p. 476, note; Allard, *Histoire des persécutions*, I, 116 ff.; Harnack, *Geschichte der alt-christlichen Litteratur*, II, 866; Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, part 2, I, 51.

¹¹ "Imperatoria brevitatem," says Tacitus, referring to Galba. Tacitus, *History*, bk. 1, chap. 18.

¹² Pliny, *Letters*, x, 97.

¹³ Tertullian, *Apology*, 2.

forming certain religious ceremonies touching the State gods, they were disturbing the "Roman order." This is precisely why a simple "adoration of the gods" will bring them complete pardon. The "Roman order" does not require search to be made for Christians: this would involve a commotion not demanded by the situation. The crime of being a Christian will become punishable only if it is made manifest by a precise denunciation.

This, at any rate, is Trajan's view. From this principle many of his successors drew more severe consequences; they did not alter it essentially. The reasons of State, so unjustly appealed to against the Christians, were advanced, now by the jealousy of Jewish sects, now by the monstrous calumnies which the pagans invented about the Christian mysteries. But, even when the decrees of persecution seem forced upon the emperors by the rage of the people, the final reason for the attack on Christianity will remain this principle which, through Trajan, goes back to the first persecution by Nero: the Christian is the enemy of the Roman civilization, understood after the pagan manner; he is an object of "hatred for mankind."¹⁴ Thus are we to explain this curious anomaly, puzzling at first glance, namely, that the fiercest persecutors of the Church are not always the most detestable from the moral point of view. Often they have but little care for the Roman unity, whereas those most devoted to the State are at times led to make a sort of divinity of it, to which they sacrifice all.¹⁵

This was so in the case of Emperor Trajan. His reign was

¹⁴ Allard, in his *Ten Lectures on the Martyrs* (pp. 120 ff.), and more fully in the *Revue des questions historiques* (July, 1912), clearly shows that the liberty accorded to Christianity, far from being a cause of weakness for the Roman Empire, was, from the time of Nero, an element of peace and security.

¹⁵ On the causes of the persecutions, see Allard, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-125, and "La Situation légale des chrétiens pendant les deux premiers siècles," in the *Revue des questions historiques*, 1896, pp. 5-43; Callewaert, "De la base juridique des premières persécutions," in the *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 1911, pp. 5-16, 633-651.

glorious in many respects, but it was stained by the blood of three holy pontiffs: the head of the Church of Rome, the head of the Church of Jerusalem, and the head of the Church of Antioch: St. Clement, St. Simeon, and St. Ignatius.

The account of the condemnation, exile, and death of the great Pope St. Clement is preserved in the *Passio Clementis*,¹⁶ which is quoted by Gregory of Tours,¹⁷ and seems to be known to the writer of the note on Clement I in the *Liber Pontificalis*.¹⁸ The plainly legendary details of this document were pointed out long ago. But "even in the most incorrect histories, there is usually some basis of truth."¹⁹

According to the best critics, the following are the historical elements contained in this document. On the occasion of a popular uprising in Trajan's reign, Pope Clement was exiled to the Chersonesus. There he found two thousand Christians, who had been condemned to the hard labor of the marble quarries long before. Clement consoled and encouraged them. Many conversions took place in the district. With the building material of the abandoned temples and with the wood of the forsaken sacred groves, churches were constructed. These facts reached the ears of the Emperor, who spared the multitude of the Christians, but ordered the aged Pope to sacrifice to the gods, under pain of death. When Clement refused to obey this command, the judge gave orders that an anchor be fastened to his neck and he be thrown into the sea. "There is nothing incredible in this account," says Allard,²⁰ and

¹⁶ See this document in Leclercq, *Les Martyrs*, I, 189 ff.

¹⁷ St. Gregory of Tours, *De gloria martyrum*, 35 f.; cf. *Missale gothicum*, in Mabillon, *De liturgia gallicana*, p. 218.

¹⁸ Duchesne, *Liber Pontificalis*, I, 124, note.

¹⁹ Tillemont, *Mémoires*, II, 139. Tillemont makes this remark in connection with the Acts of SS. Nereus and Achilleus. And he does not pass a definite judgment on the authenticity of the *Passio Clementis*. He says: "We would wish that these things were as certain as they are famous." (*Ibidem*, p. 174.) But the difficulties which made the learned critic hesitate, have, it seems, for the most part been removed by Allard, *Histoire des pers.*, I, 170 ff., and by de Rossi, *Bullett. di archeol. crist.*, 1864, p. 5.

²⁰ Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

Duchesne proves that the tradition of St. Clement's martyrdom was current in Rome as early as the end of the fourth century.²¹

There is no historic document that enables us to determine the date of St. Clement's martyrdom. But we know the date of the death of St. Simeon, bishop of Jerusalem, and of St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch. It was the year 107.²²

The story of the last days of the holy Bishop of Jerusalem is told by Eusebius, who takes the details from Hegesippus' account. This latter, a converted Jew of the second century, was well situated to be exactly informed. Simeon, son (or grandson) of Cleophas and cousin of our Lord, was 120 years old. He was denounced by Jews and by Judaizing Christians, both as a Christian and as a descendant of King David. The accusation was received by the consular legate of Palestine, Tiberius Claudius Atticus, who had the venerable old man tortured. The holy Bishop's courage aroused the admiration of all present. At last he was put to death on a cross. Hegesippus adds that, as the search for David's descendants was further prosecuted, those very ones who had denounced their pastor were arrested and put to death after being found to belong to the number of the Savior's relatives. God's justice was thus exercised even in this world upon the vile informers.²³

St. Ignatius of Antioch

We are totally ignorant of the circumstances that led to the arrest and execution of St. Ignatius. We have no details of

²¹ Duchesne, *Liber Pontificalis*, I, 124; cf. *ibidem*, p. xci. Duchesne observes that neither St. Irenaeus nor Eusebius nor St. Jerome speaks of the martyrdom of this great Pope. So true is it that silence by the very best informed writers on an event of the highest importance cannot be regarded as a conclusive proof against the historical reality of that event.

²² Eusebius places St. Simeon's martyrdom in the tenth year of Trajan, *i. e.*, 107. On the date of St. Ignatius' martyrdom, see Allard, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-192.

²³ Eusebius, *H. E.*, III, xxxii, 1-4; cf. *Acta sanctorum*, February, III, 53-55.

his martyrdom. But we possess something better than that: the genuine letters in which the intrepid confessor of the faith, shortly before being ground by the teeth of lions, reveals his great soul. "Neither Christian antiquity nor indeed any other antiquity offers anything more beautiful."²⁴ Ignatius was condemned at Antioch. His journey to Rome, along the coasts of Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece, was a triumphal progress. The fame of the holy bishop had spread through all the Church, especially in Asia Minor. Why did Roman justice require that he be put to death in Rome, in the amphitheater? We know that it was customary for the Romans to choose the most handsome men for those spectacles, and not the least of the trials which the Christian martyrs had to undergo was to be thus displayed to satisfy the curiosity of the populace. But beyond the growling wild beasts, beyond the crowd thirsting for excitement, they beheld, like the deacon Stephen, the opened heavens. This is the example that St. Ignatius gave. In the letter which reached Rome ahead of him, he wrote to his beloved brethren:

"Pray for me, that God would give me both inward and outward strength, that I may not only be called a Christian, but be found one, when I shall no longer appear to the world. . . . I write to the churches and signify to them all that I am willing to die for God, unless you hinder me.²⁵ Suffer me to be food to the wild beasts, by whom I shall attain unto God. For I am the wheat of God; and I shall be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ. . . . Let fire and the cross, let the companies of wild beasts, let breakings of bones and tearing of members, let the shattering in pieces of the whole body, and all the wicked torments of the devil come upon me; only let me enjoy Jesus Christ.

²⁴ Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

²⁵ St. Ignatius may have feared that the intervention of the Christians at Rome would obtain the Emperor's favor, or rather that the earnestness of their prayers would rob him of the martyr's crown.

. . . Pardon me, my brethren; ye shall not hinder me from living; nor, seeing I desire to go to God, may you separate me from Him for the sake of this world. Suffer me to enter into pure light; where being come, I shall be indeed the servant of God. If any one has Him within himself, let him consider what I desire.”²⁶

Not without good reason has this letter been considered to set forth the perfect idea of Christian martyrdom. A Christian martyr is not merely a witness to a dogmatic fact; he is also *eo ipso*, to use St. Thomas’ phrase, a “witness of the faith,”²⁷ a witness of Christ living in him, of that eternal life to which martyrdom opens the way for him and toward which he rushes with all the strength of his hope and love.²⁸

St. Ignatius’ letters to the various churches have a still more important bearing. Two great heterodox currents were then flowing through the churches of the East. Some attacked the Savior’s divine person, holding that He was simply a man; such were the Ebionites and the Cerinthians. The others attacked His human nature, teaching that the Word of God became incarnate and died only in appearance; these were the Docetae. The former heresy spread especially in the churches of Magnesia and Philadelphia; the latter advanced mostly in the churches of Tralles, Smyrna, and Ephesus. From all these churches there came to the bishop of the great Church of Antioch, to this glorious confessor of the faith, requests for advice. The replies to these requests are the letters to the Magnesians, the Philadelphians, the Trallians, the Smyrnaeans, and the Ephesians.

“There is one God, who manifested Himself through Jesus

²⁶ Funk, *Patres apostolici*, I, 255–261. Translation by Edward Burton, in the *Apostolic Fathers*, vol. II.

²⁷ St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, 2a 2ae, q. 124, a. 4. “Martyr dicitur, quasi fidei christianae, per quam visibilia pro invisibilibus contemnenda proponuntur.”

²⁸ Freppel, *Les Pères apostoliques et leur époque*, pp. 397–419.

Christ, His Son," he writes to the Magnesians; ²⁹ and he urges them "to be diligent therefore to be confirmed in the ordinances of the Lord and the Apostles . . . in the Son and the Father and the Spirit." ³⁰ "God manifested Himself through Jesus Christ, His Son, who is His Word proceeding from silence." ³¹ After so clearly affirming the divinity of Christ, Ignatius also affirms His real humanity. "He is in truth of the family of David according to the flesh . . . truly born of a virgin . . . truly nailed to a tree in the flesh for our sakes." ³² . . . I know and believe that he was in the flesh even after the Resurrection." ³³

The two heresies which the confessor of the faith attacks spring from the same root—the Judaizing spirit. The holy Bishop gives warning of the danger. To the Philadelphians he says: "If anyone interpret Judaism to you, do not listen to him." ³⁴ "Be not seduced. To face about would be to give up the grace you have received. The prophets of old are appealed to; but the prophets were disciples of Christ in the Spirit, and to Him they looked forward as their teacher. . . . It is monstrous to talk of Jesus Christ and to practise Judaism." ³⁵

But it was not enough to defend the divinity of Christ against the naturalism of Cerinthus; the reality of His redemptive Incarnation against the fanciful idealism of the Docetae; ³⁶ in a word, the broad and full teaching of the Gospel against the narrow conceptions of a decadent Syna-

²⁹ *Magnesians*, 8.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, 13.

³¹ *Ibidem*, 8. See other citations in Tixeront, *History of Dogmas*, I, 122 ff.

³² *Smyrnaeans*, 1.

³³ *Ibidem*, 3.

³⁴ *Philadelphians*, 6.

³⁵ *Magnesians*, 9, 10.

³⁶ The dogma of Redemption is explicitly taught in several places in St. Ignatius' letters. (Tixeront, *op. cit.*, I, 126.) The Real Presence of the Savior's body in the Eucharist is clearly affirmed in the *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 7.

gogue. It was necessary also to proclaim the great principle that preserves the Church from schism and heresy. On this point the letters of St. Ignatius are of the first importance.

Like Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch knows only one guarantee of orthodoxy—obedience to the hierarchy. The Roman pontiff endeavored to prove the legitimacy of that hierarchy by its Apostolic institution. Ignatius is a mystic, and so views this principle from a different angle. He speaks of being “subject to the bishop as to the grace of God, and to the presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ.”³⁷ “It is fitting that you [priests] should live in harmony with the will of the bishop, as indeed you do. For your justly famous presbytery, worthy of God, is attuned to the bishop as the strings to a harp. Therefore by your concord and harmonious love Jesus Christ is being sung.”³⁸ The faithful are members of Christ. Ignatius says to them: “It is profitable for you to be in blameless unity, in order that you may always commune with God.”³⁹ “Be united to the bishop and to the presbytery and to the deacons.”⁴⁰ “The bishops are the thought of Jesus Christ, as Jesus Christ is the thought of the Father.”⁴¹ “For the first time in Christian literature, we find here the name ‘Catholic Church’ pronounced.”⁴²

But does the holy Bishop of Antioch acknowledge a supreme head of this Catholic Church? It is beyond doubt that he does. The two fundamental principles of his ecclesiology—the hierarchy and unity—presuppose the existence of a sole authority; and the text of his letter to the Romans shows that he considers that the seat of that supreme authority is at Rome.

³⁷ *Magnesians*, 2.

³⁸ *Ephesians*, 4.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Philadelphians*, 4.

⁴¹ *Ephesians*, 3.

⁴² Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, p. 139.

The beginning of his letter to the Romans, or rather to the Roman Church, is significant. He addresses it "to the Church beloved and illumined," to the Church that "presides in the country of the Romans, that presides at the love-feasts" (the charities).⁴³ If we weigh these expressions, if we compare them with those used by Ignatius in his letters to the other Churches, there is no room for doubt; here is question of the primacy of the Church of Rome over the entire Catholic Church. The Church of Rome "presides in the country of the Romans," she "presides at the charities." "If the martyr had been writing to the Bishop of Rome, these presidencies might be considered merely local in character, because, in his own diocese, the bishop always presides. But here, there is no question of the bishop, but of the Church. Over what did the Roman Church preside? Was it merely over some other Churches or dioceses, within a limited area? Ignatius had no idea of a limitation of that kind. Besides, were there in Italy any Christian communities distinct in their organization from the community of Rome? The most natural meaning of such language is that the Roman Church presides over all the Churches."⁴⁴

Pope St. Evaristus

The see of Rome was at that time occupied by St. Alexander, the second successor of St. Clement. His first successor

⁴³ Funk, *Patres apostolici*, I, 152.

⁴⁴ Duchesne, *The Churches Separated from Rome*, p. 85. Cf. Chapman, "*Saint Ignace d'Antioche et l'Eglise romaine*," in the *Revue bénédictine*, 1896, pp. 385 ff. Funk (*op. cit.*, I, 253) says: "There is no doubt but that Ignatius, in this passage, is speaking of the primacy of the Church." This interpretation is admitted by many Protestants, *e. g.*, Lightfoot, Jülicher, and Harnack. Harnack, however, tries to prove that the preëminence of the Church of Rome came solely from the preëminence of its charity. This explanation is refuted by Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, pp. 141-143. The clearness of St. Ignatius' affirmations in the matter of the essential dogmas of the Catholic Church led Protestants and Rationalists long since to cast suspicions on the authenticity of his letters. Bardenhewer, after relating the history

was St. Evaristus. We have no contemporary document concerning these two popes. The *Liber Pontificalis*, composed in the sixth century,⁴⁵ says that St. Evaristus was born of a Jewish father at Bethlehem. It is said this Pope ordained fifteen bishops, seventeen priests, and two deacons, and, for purposes of administration, divided the city of Rome into titles or parishes. These expressions must not make us suppose that St. Clement's successor constructed or consecrated in Rome parish churches properly so called. The reference is probably to private houses, such as the house of the Senator Pudens, which St. Peter is said to have made the meeting-place of the first Christians, or the houses of some other Christians whose names are recorded in Scripture or tradition: Prisca, Aquila, Lucina, Eudoxia, Pammachius, Fasciola.⁴⁶ By the fact that a house or a room was consecrated to liturgical worship, it was marked with a sign or title (*titulus*), similar to the signs or titles by which treasury officials marked property that was reserved to the service of the emperor. Such is the most likely explanation of this term, which passed into the language of the Church and is today reserved for churches having cardinals as titulars.⁴⁷

According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, we also owe to Pope Evaristus the law that a bishop must be assisted, in his

of the disputes on this subject, concludes as follows: "The evidence of their authenticity is simply overwhelming." (*Patrology*, p. 34.)

⁴⁵ The first three centuries are the poorest in documents on the popes. The few lines which the *Liber Pontificalis* devotes to each of them are not free from criticism. The last persecution of Diocletian systematically destroyed the Christian books, the registers, and the acts of the martyrs; this loss was irreparable. Only fragments of these documents remain. Under such conditions, the field of conjectures and probabilities is necessarily more extensive than that of fully demonstrated truth. Yet these conjectures we gather with care, out of regard for whatever portion of truth they may contain, and if we set them down as such, we shall know that we are not false to historic truth.

⁴⁶ Martigny, art. "Titre," in the *Dict. des antiq. chrét.*

⁴⁷ This is the likely sense of the obscure phrase, "*propter stylum veritatis*" (*Liber Pont.*, I, 126).

preaching, by seven deacons, whose duty it is to attest the authentic statement of his words against possible charges of heretics.⁴⁸ It is supposed that the preaching here referred to was the recitation of the Preface and Canon. The Prefaces at that time varied with each Mass; into them were sometimes introduced, besides the recalling of the feast, exhortations suited to the circumstances.⁴⁹ Evaristus is supposed to have occupied the see of St. Peter for eight years and to have died a martyr; but neither tradition nor history gives us any details of his death.⁵⁰

Pope St. Alexander

His successor, Alexander, is said to have governed the Church for ten years, from 105 to 115. The *Liber Pontificalis* credits him with the insertion into the liturgy⁵¹ of the words "*qui pridie quam pateretur*," which precede the words commemorating the institution of the Holy Eucharist, and originating the practice of blessing water, in which salt has been mixed, for use in sprinkling houses.⁵² The official note giving him the title of martyr seems to depend upon a *Passio Alexandri* which is not contemporary with the events and does not merit more than relative confidence. According to this document, Alexander was beheaded and buried in a catacomb on the Via Salaria.⁵³ This Pope may have witnessed the

⁴⁸ Duchesne, *Lib. Pont.*, I, 126.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Jaffé, *Regesta pontificum*, I, 4 f.

⁵¹ "*In praedicatione sacerdotum*." (*Lib. Pont.*, I, 127.)

⁵² *Ibid.* On this ceremony, see the *Sacramentarium Gelasianum*, bk. 3, chaps. 75 ff., in Muratori, *Liturgia romana vetus*.

⁵³ See *Acta sanctorum*, May, I, 371 ff. On the value of this document, see Tillemont, *Mémoires*, II, 590, and Duchesne, *op. cit.*, I, xci. "It is probable," says Chamard, "that the editor of the *Liber Pontificalis* confused Pope Alexander with a famous martyr of that name, who was buried on the Via Nomentana. . . . However, it is no less probable that he had another document from which he obtained the more certain notion of the pope's martyrdom." (Chamard, *Les Origines de l'Eglise romaine*, chap. 7.) It has been noted that most of the popes of the first three cen-

triumphal festivities given at Rome for twenty-three days in 106 or 107, to celebrate Trajan's victory over the Dacians. Pliny relates that 10,000 wild animals were killed in those festivities, and that 10,000 men fought in honor of him who was called "the most merciful emperor."⁵⁴ Probably more than one Christian met his death on that occasion.

In the course of the following years, the head of the Church of Rome might have seen some great works carried out for the adornment of the Eternal City: the enlargement of the baths of Titus; a gigantic aqueduct to bring a new water supply (*Aquae trajanae*) to Rome; the 260,000 seats of the Circus increased by 5,000; and upon a new forum, ornamented with a triumphal arch and a splendid colonnade, the famous column of Trajan (140 feet high), surmounted by a statue of the Emperor in military uniform with a javelin in his hand. It did not enter Trajan's mind that he was working for Christian Rome, and that one day his statue would be replaced by that of St. Peter, the lowly Galilean fisherman, a greater conqueror than any emperor, since he conquered not bodies, but souls.

Pope Sixtus I

The head of the Church, chosen to succeed St. Alexander, was a Roman called Sixtus. Doubtless the people and the clergy of the city concurred in his election. If we take Eusebius' words literally, the first four popes after St. Peter were nominated by their predecessor, namely, Linus by St. Peter, Cletus by Linus, Clement by Cletus, and Evaristus by Clement.⁵⁵ If this method of appointment really was in use, it

turies are called martyrs. Although this qualification cannot be explained by precise details, it is true in a rather broad sense. (See St. Cyprian, *Epistola ad Cornelium*; *apud Epistolas S. Cornelii*, 7; cf. Tillemont, *Mémoires*, IV, 364; De Rossi, *Roma sotterranea*, II, pref.; Chamard, *loc. cit.*)

⁵⁴ Pliny, *Letters*, VIII, 4; Dio Cassius, LXVIII, 15.

⁵⁵ Eusebius, *H. E.*, III, xiii, xxxiv.

seems not to have been long continued. A number of reliable documents establishes the fact that in the third century the election of the bishop of Rome, though his primacy was universally recognized, was subject to the same regulations as that of other bishops; the canons of the Council of Arles (in 314) and of the Council of Antioch (in 341) inform us that they are ratifying an ancient custom when they decree that "a bishop may not be appointed otherwise than by a synod, according to the decision of those bishops who, after the death of his predecessor, have the right of choosing a worthy successor."⁵⁶ It is also certain that the priests and the people took part in these "synods."⁵⁷

The election of Sixtus I must have occurred at the end of Trajan's reign, because the *Liber Pontificalis* merely says that he governed the Church in the time of Emperor Hadrian.⁵⁸

The Emperor Hadrian

Hadrian, grandnephew and adopted son of Trajan, succeeded the latter in 117. He ruled the destinies of the Empire for twenty-one years. Hadrian was a cautious politician, more discreet than his predecessor, foregoing any ambition for conquests in Asia, confining himself to the task of being an attentive and diligent administrator, being his own minister of finance, of justice, of war, of the interior, and filling each of these offices with undeniable superiority. But he was also an artist, a traveler fond of every novelty, not fearful of offending the gods of his country by having himself initiated into all the mysteries of the Oriental religions. Viewing his character from these two angles, we would expect that Ha-

⁵⁶ Council of Antioch, canon 23. Hefele, *History of the Councils of the Church*, II, 73.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Canones Hippolyti*, canons 7-28, *apud* Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, p. 525.

⁵⁸ *Lib. Pont.*, I, 128.

drian would be less a persecutor of Christianity than was Trajan. Would not the statesman resolutely sacrificing every ambitious undertaking for the sake of the Empire's tranquillity, the philosopher skeptical of every religious creed, let the Christian religion develop freely at Rome and in the provinces? An important rescript, issued by Hadrian about 124,⁵⁹ seemed to justify these anticipations. Licinius Granianus, a proconsul of Asia, complained that popular rage often induced magistrates to pass death sentence upon men whose only crime was the name they bore and the religious sect to which they belonged. If this did not imply a request for the revision of Trajan's rescript, it was at least a complaint about abuses in its application. The reply of the imperial philosopher was hesitant. He forbade "clamorous entreaties and outcries," with which the mobs hostile to the Christians used to besiege the magistrates. But he made no decision as to whether the name of Christian was punishable, or whether, to incur the rigor of the courts, a person must be guilty of some specific crime. He said: "If anyone accuses and proves that the aforesaid men do anything contrary to the laws, you will also determine their punishments in accordance with their offences."⁶⁰

In short, in words less firm than those of Trajan, the Emperor Hadrian took into account only the matter of external order. His decisions seemed more liberal than those of his predecessor; but they were no less fatal for the Christians. In fact, of the jurisprudence which, since Nero, considered the mere name of Christian as an offence against the national institutions, he abolished nothing; he found no fault with the popular frenzy which branded the disciples of Christ with the

⁵⁹ Modern criticism is unanimous in recognizing the authenticity of this rescript, quoted in full by St. Justin at the end of his *First Apology*. (See Waddington, *Fastes des provinces asiatiques*, pp. 197 ff.; Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, I, 242; Renan, *L'Eglise chrétienne*, p. 32, note.)

⁶⁰ St. Justin, *First Apology*, 68.

charge of atheism and immorality; he withdrew nothing of Trajan's regulation which directed magistrates to condemn every Christian who would refuse to sacrifice to the gods of the Empire. The popular charges became less clamorous, but they grew more numerous; though the magistrates appeared somewhat more exacting regarding the genuineness of the accusations, they continued pitilessly to condemn the accused who were denounced as Christians and proven to be so.

Thus Hadrian's reign was no less disastrous for the Christians than that of Trajan. The Acts of St. Faustinus and companions, of SS. Alexander, Hermes, and Quirinus, of St. Getulius, of SS. Sophia, Pistis, Elpis, and Agapius, of SS. Sabina and Seraphia, of SS. Herperus and Zoe (slaves), of St. Mary (a slave), and of St. Symphorosa and her sons, all bear witness to the blood that was shed under the rule of this Emperor. To recover the historic truth at the basis of the acts of these martyrs, it is often necessary to sift the many legends with which popular imagination embellished them. Archeological monuments of unquestionable authenticity, however, leave no room to question their substantial truthfulness and the genuineness of certain characteristic details.⁶¹

Mary, a slave, in the service of a decurion, was accused of being a Christian. The excited mob called for her death, crying out: "Let a terrible fire consume her alive." The judge said to her: "Since you are a slave, why do you not profess the religion of your master?" As remarked by the historian of the persecutions, this was a truly Roman question. Such is the idea which the Romans had of a slave's conscience. It was Seneca who wrote: "A slave never has the right to say, No."⁶²

⁶¹ For a critical consideration of these *Acta*, see Allard, *op. cit.*, I, 202-234, 266-280.

⁶² "*Servus non habet negandi potestatem.*" Seneca, *De beneficiis*, III, 19. On the substantial authenticity of the Acts of St. Mary, see Le Blant, *Les Actes des martyrs*, p. 184.

Symphorosa was the widow of the martyr Getulius, who had been put to death at the beginning of Hadrian's reign for having evangelized the Sabine country. To her the Emperor said: "Sacrifice to the all-powerful gods, or I will sacrifice you along with your children." "Whence comes this happiness to me," she replied, "that I am worthy of being offered with my sons as a victim to God?" "Choose, either to sacrifice to our gods, or to die." In answer to this, she said: "I desire only to rest with my husband Getulius, whom you slew for the name of Christ." Hadrian, after having her variously tortured, ordered that she be thrown into the Anio, with a stone fastened to her neck. On the next day, the Emperor had her seven children put to death in various ways.⁶³

In one respect, Hadrian seems to have rendered the condition of the Christians better. He tracked them down and had them sentenced to death; but he let them talk. In his reign the pleas in behalf of the Christian religion increased in number. These pleas (apologies) were addressed sometimes to the emperor, again to the senate, or to public opinion. Eusebius preserves this fragment from an apology presented to Emperor Hadrian by Quadratus, a disciple of the Apostles in Asia Minor: "The works of our Savior were always present, for they were true, those who were cured, those who rose from the dead, who not merely appeared as cured and risen, but were constantly present, not only while the Savior was living, but even for some time after He had gone, so that some of them survived even till our own time."⁶⁴ A few years later, shortly after 135, there appeared another apology, more celebrated among the Fathers, which seems to have

⁶³ Ruinart, *Acta sincera*, pp. 18-20; Leclercq, *Les Martyrs*, I, 207-209.

⁶⁴ Eusebius, *H. E.* IV, iii, 2; Funk, *Patres apostolici*, p. 371. Funk (*loc. cit.*) fixes upon 125 or 129 as the date of the writing of this Apology. Evidently the words "until our day" do not refer to the date of the Apology, but to the period of the author's childhood, *i. e.*, the years 80-100. (Cf. Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 149.)

served as a basis for the apologetic work of St. Justin. It is the *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus*, by Aristo of Pella. The author personifies in a Jew (Jason) the whole list of objections which the pagans made against the Christian religion; he appears to have planned a complete apologetic. Eusebius, Origen, Celsus, and St. Jerome speak of this important work, of which, unfortunately, neither the original Greek text nor any translation has come down to us.⁶⁵

The device of placing in the mouth of a Jew all the calumnies passed about by the people against Christianity, is comprehensible at that period. The Christians remembered that the fiercest of the persecutions against their faith had been let loose through the denunciations of the Jews. Moreover, the Jews had just made themselves hateful to the Empire; to point to them as the sworn enemies of the Christian name might be good tactics. In 132, a deed of desperate fanaticism stirred up Judea. A certain Bar-Coziba ("son of deceit"), who changed his inglorious name to Bar-Cocheba ("son of the star"), claimed to be the star foretold by Balaam, *i. e.*, the Messias. The eighty-five jubilees of Elias, according to the calculations of the rabbis, were near their close. The most famous of these rabbis, the scholarly Akiba, since then venerated by the Jews as a second Moses, gave royal anointing to Bar-Cocheba and set him upon a horse, the while he himself held the stirrup. The whole Jewish race, save those who acknowledged Jesus as the Messias, bounded with hope. So grave did the danger to the Empire appear, that Hadrian summoned Julius Severus, the ablest of his generals, from the interior of Britain. The revolt was put down without pity. Palestine was subdued and devastated with unfeeling and inexorable rigor. Those who escaped death on the field of battle were sold in the slave markets of Terebinth and Gaza. A man,

⁶⁵ On Aristo, see Batiffol, *Anciennes littératures chrétiennes, la littérature grecque*, pp. 89 f.; Bardenhewer, *Patrology*, pp. 48 f.

so it was said, was sold at the price of a horse. Those who were not bought were taken to Egypt as slaves.⁶⁶ What was left of Jerusalem was destroyed; the Temple site was plowed up and sowed with salt, as a sign of malediction and sterility. In the place of the holy city there arose Hadrian's completely pagan city, Aelia Capitolina; on the ground but recently occupied by the Temple, was placed a statue of the Emperor beside one of Jupiter.⁶⁷

During this terrible campaign, many Christian converts from Judaism were martyred by their countrymen for having refused to take part in the revolt. These heartless cruelties deeply affected their brethren sprung from the Gentile world, who, we may well suppose, joined with the Roman pagans in a malediction of the deicidal and fratricidal race that so long followed them with its hatred.

Aquila

But the Synagogue was not dead. Very soon after the great catastrophe it showed evidences of vitality. A scholar, Aquila by name, gave an impetus to the study of the Jewish Law by presenting his fellow-Jews with a new translation of the Bible, intended to replace the Septuagint Version. The union of the Jewish and the Greek spirit was to bring about the gigantic movement of Gnosticism.

The Jewish nation had just undergone a cruel chastisement, but the Jewish Synagogue was free. Its faith was not proscribed in the Roman Empire, its places of prayer were left standing, its meetings were legal.⁶⁸

Among the pagans who, under Hadrian, were engaged in

⁶⁶ St. Jerome, *In Zachariam*, II; Origen, *Against Celsus*, VII.

⁶⁷ Champagny, *Les Antonins*, II, 71-74.

⁶⁸ *Idem*, p. 85. There are preserved some Judeo-Roman tombs of this period, with the palm, the candlestick, the titles of "father" and "mother of the synagogue."

the construction of Aelia Capitolina, was, so it was said, a Greek from the province of Pontus, a relative of the Emperor. His name was Aquila. The extent of his knowledge and the energy of his character persuaded the Emperor to appoint him to superintend the immense building project. Impressed at sight of the virtues and miracles that were in evidence among the Christians, he asked for and received Baptism.⁶⁹ But, as his heart was not purified by humility, knowledge remained his supreme god. He was reprov'd on account of his passion for astrology. This angered him. He was excommunicated. No longer wishing to be a Christian, ashamed to become a pagan again, he became a Jew. He imagined a Judaism that would break all the bonds connecting the religion of Moses with the religion of Christ, and that would set up the Old Law in opposition to the New. For this reason, says St. Epiphanius, he wrote a new Greek version of the Bible, "suppressing such parts as bore testimony in favor of Christ."⁷⁰ A learned rabbi, Akiba, helped him in the undertaking.⁷¹

Such was the origin of the famous Greek Bible of Aquila, an important work, ingenious, carefully done, showing a deep understanding of the Hebrew language, but slavishly literal and obviously colored in the Messianic passages, as was remarked by St. Justin, St. Irenaeus, Origen, and St. Jerome.⁷² The Jews favored it as against the Septuagint, and made use of it in spreading their doctrines in the Greek world. They employed it also to corrupt Christianity and to nourish, in the Church, that Judaizing spirit which, in the teachings of the Ebionites and the Elkesaites, tended to base the religion of Christ on a very gross interpretation of the Old Testament.

⁶⁹ St. Epiphanius, *De mensuris et ponderibus*, chap. 14.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ St. Jerome, *In Isaiam*, 49.

⁷² See Batiffol, art. "*Aquila*," in the *Dict. de la Bible*. Aquila's translation is incorporated in Origen's Hexapla.

The Ebionites

The Ebionites, whose origin we observed at the very beginning of Christianity, had, by fusion with the sect of the Essenes, taken on a new development about the year 100. We find their doctrine set forth in a series of sermons and adventure stories published under the name of St. Clement of Rome.⁷³ According to Essenean Ebionitism, God has a form and members, because every being is finite and limited. Created beings are divided into good and bad. So, too, there are good and bad prophets. The latter are descended from Eve, the female, evil element of the world. From Adam are descended the good prophets, the greatest of whom is Jesus. He is the son of God, but he is not God, for God is the Unbegotten, the Innascible, and Jesus is the begotten and the son.⁷⁴

The Elkesaites, whose ideas and practices we learn from Origen, St. Epiphanius, and the *Philosophumena*, took their doctrine from the Book of Elchasai, which was held to be a revelation made in the third year of Trajan (A. D. 100) by a gigantic angel, called the Son of God, having at his side a wife of like size, the Holy Spirit. A curious baptism, with magical formulas and odd incantations, was the form of initiation into this sect. All the ritualistic laws of the Jews were kept. Christ, born of Mary, as other human beings are born, was merely a reincarnation, for he had already passed through several bodies and had borne several names. The *Philosophumena* adds that the Elkesaites had also certain secret beliefs and practices.

These strange sects would count for little in the religious movement of mankind. Before long they disappeared. It is mostly their oddness that draws attention to them. Yet they

⁷³ The *Recognitiones* is a popular romance. The pseudo-Clementine writings will be found in the first two volumes of Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*.

⁷⁴ Tixeront, *History of Dogmas*, I, 165 ff.

have a symbolic significance. The Ebionite, like the Elkesaite, is the proud Jew, inconsolable for the loss of his nationality and for the failure of his gross Messianism, trying to obtain a compensation in a majestic but vain fancy in which he seeks to draw the nations after him.⁷⁵

Gnosticism

A less ephemeral success crowned the attempts of those who sought to revive the Jewish spirit by its union with the Hellenic. This was the origin of Gnosticism, which is "the evolution of Jewish thought, stimulated by Greek philosophic speculation."⁷⁶ This applies especially to the first phase of the Gnostic heresy. If we consider the whole history of Gnosticism, we shall see that it is an effort of Greek thought to absorb Judaism and Christianity, as well as an effort of Jewish thought to assimilate Christian and Greek thought without itself being transformed. May we not also discover therein an effort of the Christian spirit—an effort legitimate in principle, but less so in its actual development—to give philosophic expression to the doctrines and practices of Christianity, or, if you wish, to transpose into the language of ancient philosophy the doctrinal and moral teaching of the sacred Books? Tertullian remarks that, in the strangeness of its formulas and symbols, Gnosticism did in reality broach the greatest problems that stir the human mind, namely: What are the possible relations between God and the world? How can the Pure Spirit, the infinite Being, know, produce, and govern the material and the finite? What is the origin of evil, and how, once it has been committed, can it be repaired?⁷⁷

The history of the Gnostic movement includes two distinct phases. During the second phase especially, toward the close

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 168 ff.

⁷⁶ Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 113.

⁷⁷ Tertullian, *De praescr.*, vii; cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Excerpta a Theodoto*, 78.

of the second century and beyond, we meet that multiplication of systems, with strange names, mysterious and sometimes shameful ceremonies, and obscure theories, in which theurgy, so-called illuminatism, and magic are more in evidence than philosophy. The first phase, appearing in Hadrian's time and continuing to the reign of Antoninus Pius, is, on the contrary, marked by the intellectual worth and relatively high moral attitude of the leaders of the movement.

The idea inspiring Gnosticism possesses a certain majesty. Jewish monotheism is plainly its starting point. There is primarily a desire to conceive a very pure and lofty idea of the Divinity. To make this idea as pure as possible, it is stripped of every notion applicable to human nature, until it is impossible to speak of it except by calling it the Great Silence (*Sige*). To make this idea as lofty as possible, they conceive God as an infinitely remote Being, infinitely separated from man and nature, and they call Him "Chaos" (*Bythos*). An eternal silence in the depths of an infinite chaos: this, they say, is the only concept worthy of the Divinity.

But matter is here, palpable and unrefined; evil is here, visible and distressing; the heart of man is here, aspiring to purification, to liberation from matter, to union with God. How is this appalling dualism to be solved? It is on this question that the schools divide.

In the time of Trajan, a certain Saturnilus of Antioch, spoken of by Hegesippus,⁷⁸ taught that between the supreme God, whom no one can know or name, and the visible world, there were intermediate spirits, created by God. After a dazzling image, fleet as lightning, which came to them from God, they created, or rather they tried to create, man. They succeeded in producing only an incomplete, crawling creature. This was primitive man. But God, recognizing therein some image of Himself, took pity on it; He sent it a spark of life

⁷⁸ Eusebius, *H. E.*, IV, xxii, 5.

which made this creature a man, and which is destined some day to return to the divine principle.

This is merely a rough outline of the great systems that Basilides, Carpocrates, and Valentinus elaborated in Hadrian's reign.

Basilides was born in Syria. He taught at Alexandria ⁷⁹ and he gave out his doctrine to be a traditional teaching going back to the Apostles, professing to derive his ideas from St. Peter through the intermediary of a certain Glaucias, and also appealing to the authority of St. Matthew.⁸⁰ His theory was not much more than an amplification and more systematic statement of Saturnilus' doctrine: the idea of an inaccessible divinity, of an evil world, of intermediate spirits whom God employed to act upon the world, forms the basis of his religious philosophy. He adds the notion of a division of the spirits into good and bad angels, and he gives an important place to magical operations.⁸¹

Carpocrates of Alexandria, a contemporary of Basilides, is openly a Platonist. According to him the first principle of all things is the Monad, in which eventually every spirit will be absorbed in perfect bliss. All souls, before their earthly existence, have contemplated the eternal truths; but some keep a more vivid memory of them than do others. Great men are those in whom these memories are the more perfect. They possess the Knowledge (*Gnosis*), which is the supreme good. The line of great men includes Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and, most eminent of all, Jesus, in whom the eternal ideas, which he had perceived in the bosom of the Father, were so

⁷⁹ Basilides taught about the years 133-155. (Harnack, *Chronologie*, p. 290.)

⁸⁰ Or St. Matthias, according to the variant readings of the manuscripts.

⁸¹ Such is the description given by St. Irenaeus (*Haereses*, I, xxiv, 3 ff.). The author of the *Philosophumena* (VII, xiv) gives a different interpretation; but all the evidence leads us to suppose that we have to do with an evolution of the doctrine of Basilides, such as it was in the third century. (See Dufourcq, *Saint Irénée*, pp. 62-64.)

present and living. Virtue, says Carpocrates, is an ascent toward the Monad, or toward the Father, by a progressive liberation from human conventions and laws. It is evident to what excess such a doctrine might lead. Carpocrates' disciples made immorality a means of salvation.⁸²

Valentinus of Rome was a mighty spirit. He was metaphysician, psychologist, and poet. Of God, man, nature, the various forces that move beings and their deepest antinomies, he purposed giving a complete explanation capable of satisfying the philosopher by its closely reasoned logic and of being grasped by the populace by its lifelike figures.⁸³ For him *Bythos* and *Sige* (Chaos and Silence) are not two names of the Primal Being, but the divine Couple, the supreme *Syzygie* from whom everything emanates. Like his predecessors, Valentinus did not hide the fundamental antinomy between spirit and matter, God and the visible world. His whole effort consisted in showing how this infinite gap is filled with an infinite number of intermediary beings unequally perfect, how this radical opposition is corrected by a gradual yielding of the ascending and descending powers, and by the intervention of beings of pacification and harmony, placed in the world by the supreme couple who are at the summit of all things.

From Chaos and Silence are born Spirit and Truth. This is the primal Tetrad or Quaternion: *Bythos*, *Sige*, *Nous*, and *Aletheia*. Spirit, united to Truth, gave birth to the Word (*Logos*) and to Life (*Zoe*); and these communicated existence to man and to the Church. The blessed Ogdoad is thus constituted.

According to the distance to which beings go from the Primal Principle, they lose, by imperceptible diminution, some-

⁸² St. Irenaeus, *Haereses*, I, xxv; Dufourcq, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-66.

⁸³ The spread of Valentinus' ideas at Rome began about 135. (Harnack, *Chronologie*, 291.)

thing of the divine; yet they remain fecund and by generating form a series of superior beings or Aeons, which together constitute Fulness, or Pleroma. In this Pleroma, every Aeon aspires to complete comprehension of the Chaos; and this aspiration constitutes its life and joy.

It also produced the evil of the world. For the lower Aeons, those who descended as far as the limits of the Pleroma, have been jealous of the perfect Spirit, or *Nous*. In vain have the spirits of the Confines tried to restore harmony in the Pleroma; a lower Wisdom, a degraded Reason, was born in the midst of these conflicts. It is Achamoth. Being exiled from the Pleroma, Achamoth joined with Chaos; from these two was born the Demiurge, or Creator of the material world, and the whole of the material world has constituted the *Kenoma* (Void, Nothing). The decadence did not halt, but continued even to the supreme Evil, to Satan, Belzebuth, the Master of the lower world.

Man finds himself between these two worlds. The Demiurge made him material, but Wisdom infused a spirit into him. On the confines of the Kenoma, but aspiring to the Pleroma, man is divided between two worlds. Who will save him? A higher being, Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Spirit gradually purifies and who eventually will lead the elite of mankind with him into the Pleroma.

In consequence of these troubles, there was produced a division in mankind. It thenceforth includes the Materials (Hylists), the Animals (Psychists), and the Spirituals (Pneumatists). These last no longer have need of good works or virtues; they have Knowledge (Gnosis). Whoever knows the mysteries, possesses salvation; whoever knows the enigma of the world, is freed from all rule; whoever has Knowledge, no longer needs faith or law.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ St. Irenaeus, *Haereses*, I, xi; Dufourcq, *Saint Irénée*, pp. 48-53.

Pope St. Telesphorus

The immoral consequences that would result from such a doctrine may easily be surmised. At first they were not perceived. The pope who then occupied the see of Rome, St. Telesphorus, seems, however, to have been greatly concerned with maintaining austerity among the Christians.

Telesphorus was a Greek, says the *Liber Pontificalis*, and, before he became pope, lived a hermit's life. Must we understand by this that he followed the eremitical manner of living, and that the people and clergy of Rome went to the desert to look for him? Or are we to suppose that he simply belonged to a group of priests living an ascetical life more perfect than that of the rest of the clergy? This much at least is certain, that the pope who took up the government of the Church about 125 was prepared, by his previous life, to become the defender of morality among the Christians. The *Liber Pontificalis* credits him with the institution of the Lenten fast.⁸⁵ By these words we must understand the regulation of the Lenten penance: for we know, from St. Irenaeus' explicit testimony, that the Lenten observances go back earlier than this period.⁸⁶ Moreover, even after St. Telesphorus, there was great diversity in the length of the fast as in the amount of mortifications practiced in imitation of the Savior's fast, and uniformity in these observances did not obtain universally until the beginning of the fourth century by the fifth canon of the Council of Nicaea.

The *Liber Pontificalis* also attributes to St. Telesphorus the institution of the Christmas midnight Mass and the introduction of the *Gloria in excelsis* into that Mass. Pliny's celebrated letter to Trajan⁸⁷ informs us that the Christians

⁸⁵ Duchesne, *Lib. Pont.*, I, 129.

⁸⁶ Eusebius, *H. E.*, V, xxiv, 11. On the beginnings of the Lenten fast, see Duchesne, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

⁸⁷ Pliny, *Letters*, x, 96.

used to meet together before daybreak to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice. The clergy of the East have kept this practice of saying Mass at early dawn. In the West, once peace came to the Church, the hour of terce⁸⁸ was the regular time for the Holy Sacrifice. The *Liber Pontificalis* alludes to this practice and supposes that it existed at Rome in the time of St. Telesphorus. St. Irenaeus says that this Pope ended his life by a "glorious martyrdom";⁸⁹ but we have no details regarding his last moments. The Western Church honors him on January 5, the Eastern on February 22.

⁸⁸ By the ancients, the time between 6 o'clock in the morning and 9 o'clock was called the hour of prime; from 9 o'clock to noon, the hour of terce; from noon to 3 o'clock, the hour of sext; from 3 o'clock to 6 o'clock, the hour of none.

⁸⁹ Eusebius, *H. E.*, V, vi, 4.

CHAPTER II

Antoninus Pius to Septimius Severus (138-202)

UNDER Trajan and Hadrian the Christians had mainly to die. Their fearlessness in the presence of torture and death was their great apologetic. Some of them did publish written apologies, but their purpose was to offer a defense against calumny and injustice. From Antoninus Pius to Septimius Severus their courage does not fail at the sight of torments; but their apologetics assume a greater scope. Not merely do they refute their enemies' charges, but they labor to win over those enemies; they also endeavor to defend the purity of their faith against heretical alterations and, in the heat of the strife, they start the first theological synthesis of their beliefs.

Persecutions

From the coming of Antoninus Pius to the middle of the reign of Commodus, the legal status of Christians remained what the rescripts of Trajan and Hadrian had made it. The Church was nearly all the time suffering persecution in some place or other, now because of formal accusations in accordance with the imperial rescripts, now in consequence of popular commotion half-heartedly repressed or even encouraged or aroused by the magistrates themselves. From the middle of Commodus' reign to the middle of that of Severus, the Christians enjoyed about fifteen years of peace, a sort of transition between the régime of persecution by rescript, in force throughout the whole second century, and that of persecution by edict, which prevailed at intervals during the third

century.¹ St. Polycarp, St. Felicitas and her sons, St. Justin, St. Cecilia, the martyrs of Lyons, and the martyrs of Scillium were the most illustrious victims of the persecution of this period.

We know but little of the pontiffs who governed the Church at this time. Under Diocletian all the registers of the Roman Church were destroyed—an irreparable loss for the history of the Roman pontiffs. The *Liber Pontificalis*, written in the sixth century and based on oral traditions and doubtless on certain written documents that had escaped the search of the persecutors, says of St. Hyginus, the successor of St. Telesphorus, that no trace is found of his genealogy.² It is supposed that he was a philosopher and native of Athens. Tradition credits him with “the organization of the clergy.”³ It has been supposed that this remark concerns the institution of minor orders.⁴ His successor, St. Pius I, is set down as the brother of Hermas, of whom we shall have to speak later. The statement that to him is due the practice of celebrating Easter on Sunday⁵ is certainly a mistake, because Hyginus, Telesphorus, and Sixtus are mentioned by St. Irenaeus as having observed this custom.⁶ About St. Anicetus, successor of St. Pius I, we know almost nothing, except that he was born at Emesa, a city of Syria, and that he made rules about the life of the clergy, whom he forbade to take excessive care of their hair.⁷

St. Soter, who succeeded him, is supposed to have been a native of Campania. It is said that he showed great zeal in observing liturgical regulations, and forbade women to touch

¹ Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, I, iii.

² Duchesne, *Lib. Pont.*, I, 131.

³ “*Clerum composuit.*” (Duchesne, *loc. cit.*)

⁴ *Ibid.*, note.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Eusebius, *H. E.*, V, xxiv, 14.

⁷ “There can be no question here of the tonsure, which even in the sixth century was still one of the episcopal insignia.” (Duchesne, *op. cit.*, I, 134.)

the sacred linens.⁸ Eusebius quotes a valuable letter of Dionysius of Corinth, which shows that this Pope, continuing the generous traditions of his predecessors, was in the habit of giving liberal succor to poor churches. The testimony of the bishop of Corinth is noteworthy as an homage of that time to the mother Church, which, as in the days of St. Ignatius, always merited the glorious title of "the one that presides at the charities." Dionysius wrote as follows to the Romans: "This has been your custom from the beginning, to do good in manifold ways to all Christians, and to send contributions to the many churches in every city, in some places relieving the poverty of the needy, and ministering to the Christians in the mines, by the contribution which you have sent from the beginning, preserving the ancestral custom of the Romans, true Romans as you are. Your blessed bishop Soter has not only carried on this habit, but has even increased it."⁹ The end of the letter shows with what veneration the documents coming from the Apostolic See were always received at Corinth: "Today we observe the holy day of the Lord, and read out your letter, which we shall continue to read from time to time for our admonition, as we do with that which was formerly sent to us through Clement."¹⁰

St. Eleutherius, who was chosen to succeed St. Soter, is said in the *Liber Pontificalis* to have negotiated with an Anglo-Saxon king, or rather the head of a clan,¹¹ about the conversion of Britain. The historical genuineness of this event, however, is questionable.¹² More authentic is his correspondence with the Churches of Lyons and Vienne on the occasion of the martyrdom of St. Pothinus and his companions.

It was during the pontificate of Eleutherius that Irenaeus

⁸ Duchesne, *op. cit.*, I, 135.

⁹ Eusebius, *H. E.*, IV, xxiii, 10.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, no. 11.

¹¹ Great Britain was then a Roman province, and could not have had a king.

¹² Duchesne, *op. cit.*, I, cii ff.

began his great work, in which he recognizes the Roman Church as the "chief guardian of the Apostolic tradition." With Pope St. Victor, who succeeded St. Eleutherius and who governed the Church until the close of the second century, papal history is illumined with more numerous documents. In his pontificate the great baptismal controversy took place and the first discussions began in the Trinitarian controversy.

Tradition calls both of these popes martyrs. In the early centuries this title was bestowed, not only on those who gave up their life for the faith, but also on those who faced the risks of a perilous situation.¹³ But it is highly probable that Roman pontiffs were put to death in a time when the sword of persecution threatened everyone who did not practice the religion of the emperors. The silence of written documents is no reason for refusing these venerated pontiffs of the Roman Church the glorious title which the Catholic Church gives them in her liturgy.

St. Polycarp

Providence has, at least, permitted to come down to us the authentic Acts ¹⁴ of the martyrdom of St. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, disciple of St. John the Apostle. This venerable witness of the Apostolic times was the victim of one of those popular disturbances stirred up by the enemies of the Christian Church. It occurred in 155, under the proconsulate of Statius Quadratus, while Antoninus Pius was emperor. Polycarp had reached the age of eighty-six years. To the stadium, where the proconsul was then seated, the mob led him with indescribable tumult, in which could be heard especially this

¹³ St. Cyprian gives Pope Cornelius the name of martyr for the single reason that he had "willingly occupied the Apostolic See at Rome at the very time when the tyrant was issuing the most terrible threats." (Letter of St. Cyprian to Antonianus; *apud Ep. S. Cornelii*, x, 9).

¹⁴ "These *Acta* defy the hostile efforts of criticism. They were written less than a year after the event." (Leclercq, *Les Martyrs*, I, 66.)

shout: "Death to the atheists!" But we will let the precious document speak for itself, somewhat abridging the account.

"The proconsul sought to persuade Polycarp to deny Christ, saying: 'Have respect to thy old age,' and other similar things, according to their custom, such as, 'Swear by the fortune of Caesar; repent and say: Away with the atheists.' But Polycarp, gazing with a stern countenance on all the multitude of the wicked heathen then in the stadium, and waving his hand towards them, while with groans he looked up to heaven, said: 'Away with the atheists.' Then the proconsul urging him, and saying: 'Swear, and I will set thee at liberty; reproach Christ,' Polycarp declared: 'Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury. How then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?' When the proconsul yet again pressed him, and said: 'Swear by the fortune of Caesar,' he answered: 'Since thou pretendest not to know who and what I am, hear me declare with boldness, I am a Christian.' The proconsul then said to him: 'I have wild beasts at hand.' But he answered: 'Call them then. It is well for me to leave this world for a better.' Then the proconsul said to him: 'I will cause thee to be consumed by fire, seeing thou despisest the wild beasts.' But Polycarp said: 'Thou threatenest me with fire which burneth for an hour, but art ignorant of the fire of eternal punishment reserved for the ungodly.'

"While Polycarp spoke these and many other like things, he was filled with confidence and joy, and his countenance was full of grace, so that not merely did it not fall as if troubled by the things said to him, but, on the contrary, the proconsul was astonished.

"The crowds cried out that Polycarp should be burnt alive; and they immediately gathered together wood and fagots out of the shops and baths. The funeral pile was made ready. When they had bound him, placing his hands behind him, he looked up to heaven and said: 'Lord, I praise Thee for all things, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee, along with the everlasting and heavenly Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, with whom, to Thee and the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and in all coming ages. Amen.'

"When he had pronounced this *amen*, those who were appointed for the purpose kindled the fire. And we then beheld a great miracle.

The fire, shaping itself into the form of an arch, like the sail of a ship when filled with the wind, encompassed as by a circle the body of the martyr. Then those wicked men commanded an executioner to go near and pierce him through with a dagger. The centurion then placed the body in the midst of the fire and the fire consumed it.”¹⁵

Antoninus Pius (138–161)

Nothing had been changed in the religious policy of the Empire under Antoninus Pius. He succeeded Hadrian in 138 and held power until 161. The surname given him by the Roman people and preserved by history is based on the veneration he showed for his adoptive father Hadrian, on the veneration he professed for the old memories of Rome, and on the moderation he exercised in the government of the Empire. Antoninus Pius guided the civilization and power of Rome to its apogee. But unfortunately he shared the baleful prejudice of his predecessors, looking upon the Christian religion as an enemy of Roman civilization. He merely prescribed, and not always with success, that order and regularity be adhered to in prosecuting the disciples of Christ.¹⁶

Marcus Aurelius (161–180)

Marcus Aurelius, was worthier in his private and public life than his three predecessors. He had a lofty mind, a heart

¹⁵ Funk, *Patres apostolici*, I, 314–345. On the authenticity of this account, see *ibidem*, pp. ci–cv.

¹⁶ Eusebius (*H. E.*, IV, xiii) cites a decree of Antoninus forbidding the arrest and punishment of Christians for the simple charge of being Christians. Tillemont admitted the genuineness of this edict; but it has now generally been abandoned. Allard, writing in 1885 (*Histoire des pers.*, I, 293), says: “The apocryphal character of this document has no need of being demonstrated. It is obvious.” Ten years later, Harnack reëxamined the document and came to the conclusion that it is made up of several fragments, some authentic, others interpolated. He endeavored to reconstruct the genuine text which underlay the revisions of it that we now possess. It thus appears that what the Emperor forbade was the prosecution of a Christian on the charge of being a Christian, but allowed it on the charge of atheism, which would have been a charge under the common law.

that was kind even to weakness and tender even to illusion. Yet he did but aggravate the condition of the Christians in the Empire. "The nineteen years of his reign were the most vexatious and cruel that the Church had passed through."¹⁷ This seeming anomaly can be explained, if we consider three facts, stated by all historians. The first is the disintegration of the ancient world, a break-up that took place under the government of the new Emperor. Upstarts, adventurers, coming one knew not whence, became suddenly popular and at every moment threatened that hereditary succession to the throne, which by natural or adoptive sonship¹⁸ seemed to be the most solid foundation of the imperial government. Moreover, the most powerful bond of the unity of the Empire, the old national religion, appeared to weaken and dissolve in contact with the Oriental religions which kept penetrating more and more. An imperilled power easily becomes a tyrannical power. Nothing is commoner in history than the violent and sudden activity of institutions that are about to perish. The Roman Empire was no exception to this general rule. The old society rose up by a sort of instinct of self-preservation against all the powers which it regarded as hostile.

And that was not all. Marcus Aurelius was not only an emperor, he was also a philosopher. Out of all the religious forces around him—the old Roman religion, so stern and strong, the need of purification which penetrated the religions of the East, even Christianity, which he detested while secretly feeling the influence of its pure morality—he formed a new and lofty philosophy. This philosophy was made up entirely of elements taken from other sources, though he thought it quite original. He jealously defended it, as being his very own, against all other doctrines. The most formidable of these

¹⁷ Allard, *op. cit.*, I, 329.

¹⁸ The imperial power, which was handed on by heredity under the Caesars and the Flavians, was transmitted by adoption under the Antonines.

rivals he considered to be Christianity, to which its apologists were beginning to give the form of a philosophy.

The third fact is this: floods, famine, epidemics, disasters of all kinds had befallen Rome and Italy from the first months of the reign of Marcus Aurelius. Four years later the plague ravaged the Empire from end to end. In such circumstances the first impulse of the Roman people was to look for some persons to blame for these calamities, that they might immolate them to the gods. Such victims were found. "They think the Christians the cause of every public disaster, of every affliction with which the people are visited. If the Tiber rises as high as the city walls, if the Nile does not send its waters up over the fields, if the heavens give no rain, if there is an earthquake, if there is famine or pestilence, straightway the cry is, 'Away with the Christians to the lions!'"¹⁹ Marcus Aurelius himself was superstitious. And he was also weak. Not on him could reliance be placed to suppress these uprisings of the populace. He allowed those outbursts to take place and permitted them to reach their utmost consequences.

St. Felicitas

One of the most touching incidents of this outburst of Roman superstition was the martyrdom of St. Felicitas and her seven children at Rome, in 162. "She had remained a widow," we are told by the Acts of her martyrdom,²⁰ "and had consecrated her chastity to God. Night and day she spent in prayer, and was an edification for pure souls. The pagan

¹⁹ Tertullian, *To the Nations*, I, 9; *Apology*, 40.

²⁰ These Acts are not the original ones, *i. e.*, not a simple copy of the judicial proceedings drawn up by the pagans and sold to the Christians by agents of the court; but they are closely dependent on such an official report and were written only one year after the event. On the original Acts, see Le Blant, "*Les Actes des martyrs*," in the *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, vol. 35, part 2. Cf. Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, I, 342 ff.; De Rossi, *Bullett. di archeol. crist.*, 1863, p. 19; Leclercq, *Les Martyrs*, I, 210 ff.

pontiffs, seeing that, owing to her, the fair repute of the Christian name had increased, spoke of her to Antoninus Augustus,²¹ saying: 'This widow and her sons insult our gods, angering them so much that there will be no way to appease them.' The Emperor sent Publius, the prefect of the city, instructing him to force Felicitas to sacrifice to the gods. To the prefect's first urging the brave matron replied: 'Your threats cannot make me change my resolve, nor can your promises seduce me. I have within me the Holy Ghost, who will not permit that I be overcome by the demon.' Then said Publius: 'Wretched woman, though you find it sweet to die, at least let your sons live.' 'I know,' answered Felicitas, 'that my sons will live if they consent to sacrifice to the idols; but, should they commit this crime, they will go to eternal death.' On the next day the prefect summoned her with her seven sons before him. 'Take pity on your children,' he said. Thereupon the Christian woman turned to her sons and said: 'Lift up your eyes to Heaven, my children. Jesus Christ awaits you there with his saints.' " The mother and children were brave to the very end. Sentence of death was decreed against them. The eldest of the sons was beaten to death with leaded whips; the second and the third fell beneath the blows of the cudgel; the fourth was thrown into the Tiber. The last three and the mother were beheaded.²²

Felicitas and her sons died as victims of popular superstition. The next year Justin was sacrificed to the jealousy of the pagan philosophers.

St. Justin Martyr

Justin was born in the early years of the second century at Sichem, the modern Nablus, in Palestine. His father, Priscus,

²¹ That is, Marcus Aurelius. See De Rossi, Allard, and Leclercq, *loc. cit.* The name Antoninus was given to all the rulers of the Antonine dynasty.

²² Leclercq, *op. cit.*, I, 210-214.

and his grandfather, Bacchius, were pagans and native Greeks. Justin was brought up in paganism. He was precocious and at a very early age attended various schools of philosophy. Being consumed with a desire for truth, he sought it of the Porch, then at the Academy, and in the school of Pythagoras. Plato's doctrine, which he next encountered, held him longer, but without fully satisfying his mind and heart. An old man, whom he chanced to meet while he was walking alone by the sea, showed him, beyond the light which comes from the study of philosophy, a light which could be found in the reading of the prophets. Justin began to read the Bible. By feeding his mind with the Sacred Scriptures, he came to understand better how human wisdom had appeared to him so insipid when he asked it for the reason of life. These things he himself tells us in books filled with his personal experience. He also relates how the sight of Christians persecuted for their faith and braving all dangers so as to remain faithful to their religion, demolished all the prejudices which his pagan education had given him about the followers of Christ.²³ About 135, he became a Christian. But this did not make him abandon philosophy; he merely tried to instil the Christian spirit into it. Or rather, he strove to set forth Christian teaching about God, man, and the world, as a new philosophy, which is, he said, "the only safe and profitable one."²⁴ Still travelling about the world, he continued to wear the philosopher's cloak,²⁵ defending his faith by spoken word and by pen against all comers—heretics, Jews, and pagans. He was convinced that "everyone who can speak the truth, yet speaks it not, will be judged by God."²⁶

One of his most vigorous campaigns was against the Cynical philosopher Crescens, "who said that the Christians are

²³ See *Second Apology*, chap. 12.

²⁴ *Dialogue*, chap. 8.

²⁵ Eusebius, *H. E.*, IV, xi, 8; Justin, *Dialogue*, chap. 1.

²⁶ *Dialogue*, chap. 82.

atheists and impious, doing so to win favor with the deluded mob and to please them.”²⁷ Justin not only attacked him wherever he was sowing his calumnies and provoked him to public disputations, but also offered, though unsuccessfully, to debate with him in the presence of the Emperor.²⁸ In the course of his campaign, he convicted Crescens of not understanding the matter under discussion.²⁹ The Cynic never forgave the Christian philosopher for the public humiliation he had suffered at his hands.

Justin did not delude himself. He writes: “I too, therefore, expect to be plotted against and fixed to the stake, by some of those I have named, or perhaps by Crescens, that lover of bravado and boasting.”³⁰ He was in fact denounced to the Roman authorities by Crescens or at Crescens’ instigation,³¹ along with six other Christians. After a short examination, he was beaten with rods and beheaded. We have the official report of his trial, from which we give the following extracts:

The Prefect (Rusticus) : “What science are you studying?”

Justin : “I have studied all the sciences, one after the other. I have chosen the doctrine of the Christians.”

Prefect : “What is that doctrine?”

Justin : “To believe in one only God, Creator of all things, and to confess Jesus Christ, the Son of God, future judge of mankind. But I, being a mere feeble man, cannot speak of His infinite divinity as it should be spoken of. This is the work of the prophets, who foretold Him for centuries through an inspiration from on high.”

Prefect : “Where do the Christians meet?”

Justin : “Wherever they can; for the God whom the Christians adore is everywhere.”

Prefect : “Are you a Christian, then?”

²⁷ *Second Apology*, chap. 3, no. 2.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, no. 5.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, no. 4.

³⁰ Τοῦ φιλοσόφου παρὰ φιλοκλέμπου. *Ibidem*, no. 1.

³¹ Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos*, 19; Eusebius, *H. E.*, IV, xvi, 8.

Justin: "I am."

Prefect: "People say you are an eloquent philosopher. If I have you flogged and have your head cut off, do you think you will then ascend to Heaven?"

Justin: "I do not think so; I know it. Of this I am so confident that I have no doubt about it."

Prefect: "Sacrifice to the gods."

Justin: "A man of sense does not abandon piety for error."

Justin's companions—Evelpistus, Hierax, Paeon, Liberianus, Chariton, and a Christian woman named Charita—replied in like manner.

Evelpistus was a slave. To him the judge spoke with contempt, saying: "What are you?" Evelpistus answered: "I am a slave of Caesar; but, being a Christian, I have received my freedom from Christ, and I have the same hope as these others." This was the first time that a slave dared publicly claim his dignity as a man before a Roman magistrate. The prefect issued the following sentence: "Let those who have been unwilling to sacrifice to the gods be scourged and beheaded."³² The sentence was executed at once.

This was in 163.³³ The Acts tell us that the bodies of these martyrs were removed by the Christians and placed "in a fitting place," that they might be worthily honored by their brethren.

St. Cecilia

A few years later a young lady of senatorial rank, Cecilia, wife of the Roman patrician Valerian, was sentenced to death for the same "crime." Out of consideration for her rank and out of pity for her youth, or perhaps for fear of stirring up

³² Leclercq, *op. cit.*, I, 86-89.

³³ Renan made futile efforts to free Marcus Aurelius, the emperor-philosopher, from blame in the execution of Justin, the first Christian philosopher. Scholars have not been convinced by Renan's attempt to push St. Justin's martyrdom back to the reign of Antoninus Pius. (See Allard, *op. cit.*, I, 265.)

too intense feelings in Rome, the judge ordered the sentence to be carried out in Cecilia's house. Tacitus, Suetonius, and later historians mention several instances of such executions in private houses, the condemned persons being variously ordered to open their veins, or to starve themselves to death, or to drink poison. The prefect who sentenced Cecilia directed that she be suffocated in the bathroom of her house.³⁴ But the Saint survived this penalty. A lictor, who was sent to cut off her head, gashed her neck three times, and left her still breathing. She continued in agony three days. After her death, the Christians buried her in a cemetery on the Via Appia.

The Acts of St. Cecilia, drawn up after the peace of the Church, for purposes of edification, have not the same historic value as the Acts of St. Justin. But the learned De Rossi, by deleting some long speeches, evident amplifications, and a few details that he judged to be legendary, has succeeded in reconstructing historically the account of St. Cecilia's arrest, trial, and death. Archeological discoveries confirm every point of the story of that young martyr, so dear to Christian piety.³⁵

The Martyrs of Lyons

While the purest Roman blood was shed in the very city of Rome for the glory of the Christian name, Gallic, Greek, and Asiatic blood was poured out for the same cause in the capital of Lyonese Gaul.

Divine Providence has permitted the preservation of one of the most exquisite accounts of martyrdom of which the Church can boast. It is recorded in a document of unquestioned authenticity, the letter written in 177 by the Churches

³⁴ An illustration in Martigny's *Dict. d'archéol. chrét.* (art. "*Balneum*"), enables us to understand how asphyxiation could be produced by the freeing of steam in the bathroom of an ancient Roman house. (Cf. Allard, *op. cit.*, I, 423.)

³⁵ On the martyrdom of St. Cecilia, see Allard, *op. cit.*, I, 419-430; De Rossi, II, xxxiii, 150, 155, 161; Guéranger, *Life of Saint Cecilia*. Her martyrdom took place some time between 177 and 180.

of Lyons and Vienne to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia.³⁶ Even Renan in presence of this memorable document was unable to restrain his deep feeling. He says: "It is one of the most extraordinary pieces that any literature possesses. Never has a more impressive picture been drawn of the lofty enthusiasm and devotion to which human nature can attain. It is the ideal of martyrdom, with the least possible boasting on the part of the martyrs."³⁷

The city of Lyons was at that time the administrative metropolis of the three provinces of the Gauls. The representatives of sixty-four peoples resided there, as in a federal city. The worship of Rome and Augustus, in charge of a high priest representing the three Gallic provinces,³⁸ was there conducted with the greatest solemnity. It has been said that, at the very time when in the Eternal City the Roman religion seemed to be retreating before the advance of philosophy, it was establishing a mighty center for itself in the great Gallic city.³⁹ Furthermore, the stream of commerce which had long since developed between the ports of Asia Minor and the Gallic cities of the Rhône had, by the very force of things, become a field of fruitful apostolate. The Christian communities

³⁶ With the exception of Ernest Havet, whose extraordinary bias is well known, all historians who have written of the early centuries of the Church, both ancient historians and modern—*e. g.*, Tillemont, Renan, Harnack, Aubé, Gaston Boissier, Duchesne—regard this letter as undoubtedly genuine. An attempt to disprove this authenticity has been made recently by James Thompson in the *American Journal of Theology* (July, 1912, pp. 359 ff.). The principal reason adduced is that before Eusebius, *i. e.*, before the fourth century, no historian, pagan or Christian, speaks of the Christians martyred at Lyons in 177. Allard (*Revue des quest. hist.*, January, 1913, pp. 53-67) refutes this paradoxical theory by showing, in agreement with De Smedt (*Principes de la critique historique*, chaps. 13 and 14), Harnack (*Expansion of Christianity*, II, 261), and Boissier (*Fin du paganisme*, I, 242 ff.), that the negative argument by itself cannot be a historic proof.

³⁷ Renan, *Marc-Aurèle*, p. 340.

³⁸ He was called "the priest of the three provinces of Gaul." (Orelli, inscription 184, vol. I, p. 98).

³⁹ Boissier, *Inscriptions antiques de Lyon*, p. 467; Bernard, *Le Temple d'Auguste et la nationalité gauloise*, p. 30.

of Lyons and Vienne were increased by the addition of Syrian and Phrygian elements that brought, along with the Christian traditions of the East, a constant renewal of vitality.

An aged and venerable bishop governed the Church of Lyons in the middle of the second century: Pothinus. His principal helper, his right hand as it were, was Irenaeus: both were natives of Asia. Both of them, too, had been disciples of Papias and Polycarp, who in turn were disciples of St. John. The Church of Lyons was nourished with the purest doctrine by an active correspondence with the churches of Asia; and it radiated its light. Archeological monuments indicate, if not a strict filiation, at least some religious dependence between the churches of Autun, Langres, Chalons, Tournus, Dijon, and the Church of Lyons.⁴⁰

The Roman colony had its center at Fourvières; the famous altar where the worship of Rome and Augustus was celebrated was at the confluence of the Rhône and the Saône. The center of the Christian population was probably on the islands of the confluence, near Athanacum, now Ainai.

Between the two religions, Christian and pagan, a clash was inevitable. This appeared the more imminent since a floating population of laborers, clerks, people who were rich and poor, idle and busy by turns, according to the fluctuations of commerce, was ever ready to foment disturbances. In 177 this popular agitation, for some unknown reason, was suddenly turned against the Christians. The Christians were publicly insulted. In the streets, on the country roads, in the public places, they were attacked, stones were thrown at them. It may be that the native Lyonese confused the Christians and their mysterious ceremonies with those gross Gnostics who had been brought to the great city of the Gauls by the commercial activity of Asia. Unhappily the Roman authorities

⁴⁰ Tillemont, *Mémoires*, III, 35 ff.; cf. Bulliot, *Essai historique sur l'abbaye de Saint-Martin d'Autun*, pp. 47-50.

were unconcerned with repressing these enmities or dispelling these misunderstandings. In the absence of the imperial legate, the tribune and the duumvirs attempted merely to put an end to the agitation by arresting a number of those whom popular report designated as Christians.

Among those whom they imprisoned were the venerable Bishop Pothinus, the priest Zachary, the deacon Sanctus, the neophyte Maturus, Attalus of Pergamus, a young female slave, Blandina, and several other Christians. One of them was placed under arrest at the first sitting of the court. This was Vettius Epagathus, a young man of noble birth and great virtue. Affected by the tortures that were being inflicted upon the accused, he gave vent to his indignation and requested that he should be heard in defense of his brethren, while he ventured to assert that there was nothing at variance with religion or piety among them. But the judge only asked whether he also were a Christian. He confessed and was thereupon transferred to the ranks of the accused.

Meanwhile the imperial legate returned to Lyons. The trial continued. At first the slaves of the accused were brought forward and put to the torture. When urged by the soldiers, says our document, "they falsely accused us of Thyestean feasts and Oedipodean incests, and things which it is not right for us either to speak of or to think of."⁴¹ These abominable lies added to the popular rage. But every effort was made to obtain a confession of these crimes from the accused themselves. In the amphitheater, before an infuriated multitude thirsting for the sight of blood, the Christians were scourged, placed in hot iron chairs, thrown to wild beasts that dragged them around the arena, in short, subjected to every torture that the mad-dened crowd demanded. The deacon Sanctus, from whom they tried to force a revelation of the secrets of the Church, would say nothing more than, "I am a Christian." Not another word

⁴¹ Eusebius, *H. E.*, V, i, 14.

could be extracted from him. The executioners then exercised their fury upon the slave Blandina. She was short and feeble. Her fellow-Christians, especially her mistress (also among the accused), were apprehensive lest she should weaken. But she was heroic. For a whole day she endured the most atrocious tortures, repeatedly saying: "I am a Christian woman, and nothing wicked happens among us."

The greatest anguish of the accused was not the thought of torture; it was the fear that some of their brethren might prove weak and deny Christ. Ten of them actually did so. But every day the arrests continued. Loyal Christians filled the places left vacant by the apostates. Our document tells us that those who resisted showed no arrogance or contempt toward these weak brethren. They condemned no one, but merely wept and prayed. They humbled themselves beneath the hand of God, to whom they owed their constancy; if anyone called them martyrs, they would not accept this title, saying that those only are martyrs who have confessed Christ to the very end.

The attitude of Pothinus, the venerable head of the Church of Lyons, was sublime. The legate asked him who was the God of the Christians. The Bishop replied: "If you are worthy, you will know." He was beaten unmercifully; the populace threw at him whatever they could lay hands on. Half-dead, he was thrown into a dungeon, where he expired two days later.

In fine, those who were found to be Roman citizens were sentenced to be beheaded; the others were destined for the beasts.

A fifteen-year-old boy, named Ponticus, and the slave Blandina, were kept for the last. It was hoped that, after they had witnessed all the sufferings of their brethren, they would weaken. But both of them showed admirable strength. The most refined torture was inflicted upon the boy. The tender words of Blandina aided him, with the grace of God, to remain constant to the end.

Blandina now alone remained. "After scourging, after the beasts, after the gridiron, she was at last put in a net and thrown to a bull. She was tossed about a long time by the beast, having no more feeling for what happened to her through her hope and hold on what had been entrusted to her and her converse with Christ. And so she too was sacrificed, and the heathen themselves confessed that never before among them had a woman suffered so much and so long."⁴² Forty-eight martyrs died thus in the metropolis of the Gauls.⁴³

The letter of the Churches of Lyons and Vienne,⁴⁴ from which we have taken the details of this martyrdom, closes with these words: "Divine grace did not fail the martyrs; the Holy Ghost dwelt in their midst." The Acts of St. Felicitas, of St. Justin, in fact, nearly all the Acts of this period, close with a triumphant doxology: "Glory to God unto all ages!" Of the two powers that clashed in the great Gallic city as in the capital of the Empire, it was the Christian power that triumphed. More and more the Empire was visibly nearing its fall. Marcus Aurelius observed this. The philosopher in him vainly resisted through sheer duty, saying: "Let the god that is in thee be lord of a living creature, that is manly and of full age . . . as one who awaits the signal of recall from life in all readiness."⁴⁵ If this meditative prince, transformed into a man of action during part of his reign, could have penetrated the future, he would have spoken with still greater bitterness the words he addressed to the tribune who came to his tent for the last time to ask for instructions: "Go to the rising sun; I am setting."

⁴² *Ibidem*, no. 56.

⁴³ Their names will be found in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* (ed. De Rossi-Duchesne), p. 73, and in Leclercq, *Les Martyrs*, I, 106 f. About half of the martyrs have Greek names, and about half, Latin. From this fact we may infer a similar numerical proportion among the Christians of Lyons.

⁴⁴ Harnack (*Expansion of Christianity*, II, 261) admits the distinction between the Church of Lyons and that of Vienne; Duchesne (*Fastes épiscopaux*, p. 41) denies it.

⁴⁵ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, III, 5.

From all sides barbarous races were pressing on the Roman frontiers. In their rear, the great nation of the Goths was beginning to move forward. Upon all these races, who were soon to give the death-blow to the Roman colossus, the rising sun of the Gospel was casting its rays. Perchance the philosopher-prince had some forboding of the future of the world, when, in his last hour, with a gesture that was more despairing than stoical, he turned his head from his son Commodus and covered his face so as to see no one, and to die alone.⁴⁶

The Emperor Commodus (180-192)

Commodus was a complete antithesis to his father. He was without any care for the country, without any policy unless that of all tyrants, which consists in confiscating and proscribing through hatred and fear and avarice. Yet from this inane and blood-thirsty despot the Christians suffered less than from his upright and intelligent predecessors. At one time it would seem that his father's spirit was urging him, that the impulse given by Marcus Aurelius was being continued: the blood of martyrs was poured out copiously. At another time, a gentler influence, that of the Christian servants of his palace or the all-powerful prayer of a beloved woman, inclined his fickle soul toward clemency.⁴⁷

The Martyrs of Scillium

The best known episode of the persecutions that raged in Commodus' reign is that of the Scillitan martyrs. The Acts of these martyrs "is rightly reckoned among the earliest and most reliable monuments of Christianity antiquity."⁴⁸ From it we quote the following:

⁴⁶ Allard, *op. cit.*, I, 433.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 435.

⁴⁸ Allard, *op. cit.*, I, 436; cf. Leclercq, *op. cit.*, I, 108; *Analecta Bollandiana*, XI, 102.

"On the seventeenth day of July [180], when Speratus, Nartallus, Cittinus, Donata, Secunda, and Vestia were brought into the judgment-hall at Carthage,⁴⁹ the proconsul Saturninus said: 'Ye can win the indulgence of our lord the Emperor if ye return to a sound mind.'

Speratus: 'We have never done ill; but when we have received ill we have given thanks, because we pay heed to our Emperor.'

The Proconsul: 'We, too, are religious, and our religion is simple.'

Speratus: 'If thou wilt peaceably lend me thine ears, I will tell thee the mystery of simplicity.'

The Proconsul: 'I will not lend my ears to thee, when thou beginnest to speak evil things of our sacred rites.'

Saturninus, the Proconsul, said to the rest: 'Be not partakers of this folly.'

Cittinus said: 'We have none other to fear except only our Lord God, who is in heaven.'

Speratus said: 'I am a Christian.' And they all agreed with him.

The Proconsul: 'What are the things in your chest?'

Speratus: 'Books and epistles of Paul, a just man.'

The Proconsul: 'Have a delay of thirty days and bethink yourselves.'

Speratus: 'I am a Christian.' And with him all agreed.

The Proconsul read out the decree from the tablet: 'Speratus, Nartallus, Cittinus, Donata, Vestia, Secunda, and the rest who have confessed that they live according to the Christian rite, . . . it is determined shall be put to the sword.'

Speratus: 'We give thanks to God.'

Nartallus: 'Today we are martyrs in Heaven; thanks be to God.' " ⁵⁰

Among the Christians martyred under Commodus, mention should be made of the philosopher Apollonius,⁵¹ the senator Julius,⁵² and a large number of other confessors of the

⁴⁹ The Roman colony of Scillium, in Africa, depended on Carthage.

⁵⁰ Leclercq, *op. cit.*, I, 109-111.

⁵¹ Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 183.

⁵² Allard, *op. cit.*, I, 442; *Acta sanctorum*, August, III, 700.

faith.⁵³ But the Christians, spreading in increasing numbers through all ranks of society, became numerous at the imperial court. We know, for example, of the aged eunuch Hyacinth, a priest of the Church of Rome. He was the foster-father of that Marcia who was a former slave of a nephew of Marcus Aurelius and entered Commodus' palace as a slave in 183, following the confiscation of her master's property. She at once became the favorite of the Emperor, who raised her to the rank and honors of a real wife, except for the title of empress. "The tradition is that she greatly favored the Christians and rendered them many kindnesses, inasmuch as she could do anything with Commodus."⁵⁴

The author of the *Philosophumena* relates that one day Marcia, "wishing to perform a good work," sent for Pope Victor and asked him for the names of the martyrs who were laboring in the mines of Sardinia. She then obtained letters of pardon, entrusted them to her old friend, the priest Hyacinth, and gave him full powers for carrying out the pardons.

A modification had taken place in the relations of the Empire and the Church. It was not yet, indeed, an official recognition of Christianity, but the summoning of this Pope to the palace to receive a communication touching his Church, and this commission carried by a Christian priest to the procurator of Sardinia, were events that show the social importance acquired by the Church and the notice which the government authorities were taking of her and of her hierarchical organization.

The Early Apologists

During the second half of the second century, the Christians did more than simply die with courage. The mere reading of their judicial examinations shows them exercising a confident

⁵³ St. Irenaeus, *Haereses*, IV, 33.

⁵⁴ Dion Cassius, *Roman History*, LXXIII, 4.

and spirited effort to convert others. Among them, and besides them, were the apologists—theologians, catechists, not only striving to free Christianity from the charges made against it, but also spreading a knowledge of its harmony, beauty, and moral excellence, showing that it was dissociated from the heretical sects that were compromising it by their evil reputation, and promoting its beneficent and sanctifying action. This was the work of a group of educated Christians. The most illustrious were Justin Martyr, the philosophers Aristides, Tatian, Theophilus of Antioch, and Athenagoras, Irenaeus, the renowned bishop of Lyons, the author of the *Shepherd*, the unknown author of the *Epistle to Diognetus*, and that great polemic whose valiant defense of the faith was known to the second century, but who, in the next century, fell into the snares of error—Tertullian.

These defenders of the Christian faith differed in style, temperament, education, and point of view. But they were all moved by the same inspiration. They felt that the struggle taking place between the pagan and the Christian world was not merely a struggle between two contending powers, but a struggle between two contrary systems of thought, two opposing moral attitudes. It was to justify the Christians' thought and moral attitude, to bring them a victory among their contemporaries, that these men wrote and spoke.

Aristides was an Athenian philosopher. His plan is simple, but bold. The populace insulted the followers of Christ by calling them atheists; the charge made against them by the courts was that of atheism and impiety. Aristides wishes to prove, as against these charges, that the Christians alone have a correct idea of the Divinity and pay it worthy homage. In the matter of religion, he says, men are divided into four classes: the barbarians, the Greeks, the Jews, and the Christians. The barbarians adore the powers of nature, the sun and the winds. The Greeks have deified the powers and passions of man. The

Jews have the worship of higher spirits, angels, but they make the mistake of honoring these more than they do God Himself and of confining themselves too much to wholly external ceremonies. The Christians alone adore God in spirit and in truth by the purity of their faith, but even more by the purity of their lives. The apology of Aristides, like the *Didache*, ends with a charming picture of the life of the early Christians.

Aristides' apology, which appeared in the reign of Antoninus Pius,⁵⁵ must have made a deep impression on upright souls.⁵⁶ Notwithstanding the gravity of the charges against the false religions, the tone of the work is calm and dignified, respectful toward the philosophers and poets of Greece.

Quite otherwise was the apology which the Assyrian philosopher Tatian published soon after. It has been said that "Tatian inaugurated the school of virulent apologists."⁵⁷ Bardenhewer says that Tatian everywhere displays a passionate harshness and partiality. He is unwilling to see any good in Hellenic culture. He repeats, without investigation, all the calumnies that were current against the Greek philosophers. What attraction there was in the warmth of his discourse and the strength of his conviction was offset by the repulsion which the bitterness of his attack aroused.⁵⁸ The fiery apologist, precursor of Tertullian, ended, like the latter, by suddenly separating from the Church. About 172 he returned to the East and founded the Gnostic sect of the Encratites, who forbade marriage, as also the use of wine and meat, and who,

⁵⁵ Eusebius places this Apology in the time of Hadrian. Until 1889, only an Aramaic fragment of it was known. In that year, Rendel Harris discovered, at the Convent of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, a Syriac translation of it, which has led scholars to assign its composition to the period of Antoninus.

⁵⁶ The Apology of Aristides has left traces in the ancient Aramaic literature. In a somewhat abridged form, it was contained in the famous *Life of Barlaam and Joasaph*. (See Bardenhewer, *Patrology*, p. 46.)

⁵⁷ Duchesne, *op. cit.*, I, 156.

⁵⁸ Bardenhewer, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

in celebrating the Eucharist, used water in place of wine—whence the name *Aquarians* which was given to them.

Athenagoras was a Christian philosopher of Athens. He frankly rejected the apologetics of invective and returned to that of simple exposition. He says that "what those need who have a care for truth and their own salvation, is the direct exposition of truth."⁵⁹ And he admits that this exposition is able to convert only well-disposed souls.⁶⁰ The apologist enters upon a large number of proofs: the innocence of the Christians, the perfection of their doctrines and moral teaching, the dogmatic and moral inferiority of paganism. He holds that every mind can find in itself traces of knowledge that will make it docile to Christian teaching. Athenagoras is familiar with the Greek poets and frequently quotes them. He is far above Aristides and Tatian in the purity and beauty of his language; but he lacks that powerful originality which assembles arguments into a well-ordered whole and gives them vitality.

Theophilus had been a pagan; he was converted in manhood through the reading of the prophets,⁶¹ and became bishop of Antioch. He also contrasts the doctrinal perfection and holiness of Christianity with the ignorance, contradictions, and moral inferiority of paganism. But he particularly insists on the dispositions of soul of his opponents. His method is psychological. He writes: "You say to me: 'Show me your God.' I reply: 'Show me what sort of men you are, and I will show you my God. Show me the eyes of your soul, that they are clear-sighted; show me the ears of your heart, that they are able to hear.'"⁶² "No doubt," he says in another place, "the reason you have such a false notion of God, is because you do

⁵⁹ Athenagoras, *De resurrectione*, II.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, no. I.

⁶¹ Theophilus, *Ad Autolycum*, I, iv.

⁶² *Ibidem*, II, i.

not practice His service.”⁶³ And again: “Formerly I too refused to believe. But now, upon better reflection, I believe. . . . In God is my guarantee. If you too wish this, submit to God also.”⁶⁴ Theophilus is the first to express by the word Trinity, *Trias*, the personal distinction of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in God.⁶⁵

Toward the end of the second century appeared a sharp but very superficial little work of the Christian philosopher Hermias, the *Irrisio gentilium philosophorum*. We know also the names of three other apologists: Melito, Apollinaris, and Miltiades. Of Melito of Sardis only a few fragments are extant. Of Apollinaris and Miltiades we have nothing. We may well suppose that, like those we have just mentioned, their apologetics consisted of occasional writings, composed hurriedly, as it were in the midst of the strife. With Hermas, St. Justin, St. Irenaeus, and Tertullian, we come to works that are more mature.

The Question of Penance

During the latter part of the second century, four great problems claimed the attention of those who belonged to the Church and of those who regarded her with religious curiosity from without: a moral problem, a philosophical problem, a dogmatic problem, and an apologetic problem. Hermas, St. Justin, St. Irenaeus, and Tertullian successively broached these four problems.

The Church, expanding among the Gentiles, opened her arms wide to the converts from paganism, to converts whose former life was often voluptuous or frivolous. She thus assimilated elements that were less pure than those of her first days. The virtue of the neophytes was not sustained by the

⁶³ *Ibidem*, I, i.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, I, xiv.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, II, xv. Theophilus calls the three persons: God, the Word, and Wisdom.

enthusiasm which marked that early period. Less frequent and less powerful were the mystical graces which at first Providence bestowed upon the Christians so lavishly. Christian communities now counted in their ranks some criminals, murderers, adulterers, and apostates. Could such offenses be blotted out by penance?

Two extreme opinions came to light. By an excusable exaggeration, many of the early Christians had imagined that Baptism and the Eucharist conferred a sort of impeccability. Did not God's gift have the power of communicating an incorruptible life? And was it possible that a rational man, permitted to nourish his soul upon his God, would reach such an excess of ingratitude as gravely to offend Him thereafter? ⁶⁶ Therefore, when these Christians witnessed the first apostasies, they saw only one possible penalty for the abominable defection: exclusion from the Church, malediction, or at least abandonment of the guilty one to God's justice. These Christians took in strict literalness the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews:

"It is impossible for those who were once illuminated [by baptism], have tasted also the heavenly gift [of the Eucharist], and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost . . . and are fallen away, to be renewed again to penance. . . . For the earth that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is tilled, receiveth blessing from God. But that which bringeth forth thorns and briers, is reprobate and very near unto a curse, whose end is to be burnt." ⁶⁷

But the harshness of such a solution provoked a radical reaction. Self-styled doctors held that every fault of a Christian should be regarded as indifferent. Did not the disciples of Carpocrates teach that man is saved by faith and charity, and

⁶⁶ See *Acta Thomae*, p. 73.

⁶⁷ Heb. 6: 4-8.

that the rest does not count? ⁶⁸ Did not certain Valentinians declare that once anyone has recognized the rights of the Holy Spirit over the spirit, the flesh should be given its rights? ⁶⁹ These doctrines, slowly trickling into the mass of the faithful, appeared to many to be the true solution.

As usually happens, the clear declarations and the decisive tone of such teaching made converts among the people, ever ready to prefer a shocking doctrine that is asserted with clearness and force to a prudent doctrine which employs shades of difference in its formulation.

Weak but sincere souls that had yielded to sin, or feared they might yield, suffered unspeakable agony. From what he had seen with his own eyes, St. Irenaeus gives us a picture of those "who have their consciences seared as with a hot iron. . . . Some, in a tacit kind of way, despairing of attaining to the life of God, others have apostatized altogether; while others hesitate between the two courses, being neither without nor within." ⁷⁰

The Shepherd of Hermas

Between the years 140 and 154, according to the conjectures of the best critics,⁷¹ there appeared at Rome a book that aimed to bring peace to troubled consciences, to refute the two radical doctrines, and to offer a prudent solution to the problem, in conformity with the Gospel spirit of justice and mercy. This book was entitled *Poimen* (*Shepherd*), and was written by a brother of Pope Pius I.⁷² Its style was simple, figura-

⁶⁸ St. Irenaeus, *Haereses*, I, xxv, 5.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, I, vi, 3.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, I, xiii, 7.

⁷¹ Funk, *Patres apostolici*, I, cxxx.

⁷² It is no longer doubtful that the author of the *Shepherd* is Hermas, a brother of Pius I; but it is questioned whether the same author took up the writing of his book at different times. This hypothesis of successive editions was defended in 1910 by Grosse-Braukmann in his brochure, *De compositione Pastoris Hermas*.

tive, and popular. The author first relates his own history. He was born in slavery, sold by his master to a Roman matron named Rhode, later freed by her, and then married. He acquired a large fortune in business, but at the same time lost both faith and virtue. Chastised by God, and stripped of his riches, he had, he says, the grace to bow beneath the hand of the Lord who struck him. But, while he was plowing on a small farm, at the gates of the city, an angel of God appeared to him in the form of a shepherd. This angel gave him certain counsels of morality which he was to communicate to his brethren.

These counsels are divided into three books: the book of the Visions, the book of the Similitudes, and the book of the Precepts or Commandments.

Hermas is not a controversialist, but an apologist, in the sense that he wishes to defend the Church and make her loved. What he desires is to confound the hypocrites and the wicked and reject them that, being thus purified, "the Church of God shall be one body, one mind, one spirit, one faith, one love."⁷³ A single inspiration runs through the whole work—to give hope of salvation to the fallen Christian. Its general subject is "the pardon of sins after a sincere repentance." He says: "The Lord bears no malice against those who confess their sins, but is merciful."⁷⁴ Every fault is remissible, according to Hermas. Neither murder nor adultery nor apostasy—the three sins that some later on wished to exclude from pardon—is reserved. Yet the author attaches two conditions to the pardon: the penitent, once converted, must afflict his soul, humble and purify himself;⁷⁵ the penitent can be converted only once.⁷⁶ Hermas seems to say also that this pardon is only an excep-

⁷³ Hermas, *Similitudes*, IX, xviii, 4.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, IX, xxiii, 4.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, IX, xxiii, 5.

⁷⁶ *Precepts*, IV, i, 8; iii, 6.

tional grace accorded merely in view of the proximate end of the world.⁷⁷ This moral doctrine of the *Shepherd* was received in the middle of the second century as a voice of mercy. To-day it seems severe. But, to appreciate it, we must put ourselves in spirit in the times when this work appeared.⁷⁸ In a period when martyrdom was threatening every Christian, a popular sermon, as Hermas' book really was, without aiming at too great theological exactness, gave Christians to understand that all were required to possess their soul in readiness for heroism.

Hermas is not theologically precise, either when he speaks of the end of the world, which he supposes to be imminent, or when he discourses on the Trinity, which he seems to grasp but poorly.⁷⁹ But he loves and venerates the Church with his whole heart. It is, he says, the first of all creatures; for it the

⁷⁷ *Visions*, I and II; cf. III; *Similitudes*, VIII, ix, 4.

⁷⁸ A. d'Alès ("La discipline pénitentielle d'après le Pasteur d'Hermas," in the *Recherches de science religieuse*, 1911, pp. 105-139, 240-263) says: "Hermas' work is not an official document, but a private document of very great worth, because it naïvely reflects the preoccupations of the pastors of the Roman Church in the second century, and the expedients of their zeal. . . . We can understand that it was judged inopportune to enumerate, for catechumens, the opportunities they might have for being reconciled to God, should they fall into sin after Baptism. For Christians who have fallen into sin after Baptism, specifically to adulterers and apostates, or idolaters, the *Shepherd* offers, for one time, on condition of penance being performed, divine pardon, and also—as is evidenced throughout the book—reconciliation with the Church. At the same time it took pains to warn them that this favor would not be repeated. For those who fell again after a first reconciliation, we cannot see what the *Shepherd* offered; but doubtless it did not leave them without hope. Whatever the severities of the *Shepherd* for the *διψυχοι*, one thing stands out clearly in the book, namely, that whoever is willing to do penance, can again enter into favor with God."

⁷⁹ "Hermas never uses the terms Word and Jesus Christ to designate the Savior: He always designates Him by the title of Son of God or Lord. This Lord is made up, during His mortal life, of two elements, a humanity or a flesh and a holy Spirit that dwells therein. Hence the question that comes up is this: Does not Hermas confound with the Holy Ghost the divine element joined to the flesh of Jesus?" (Tixeront, *History of Dogmas*, I, 115.) There seems to be only a want of verbal exactness. Lelong, in the preface of his translation of the *Shepherd*, says that, previous to Hermas, the Church showed no mercy towards sinners, and that the change in its attitude was due to Hermas. These wholly gratuitous assertions are successfully

world was made;⁸⁰ it is established upon the Son of God as upon a rock, and belongs to Him as to a master.⁸¹ And it is a hierarchical church, with its various chiefs, bishops, priests, deacons, apostles or missionaries.⁸² Its function is to teach the faithful, to train the elect.⁸³ This sole Catholic Church, superposed upon the local Churches and including them all, has a supreme head. When the aged woman who stands for the Church appears to Hermas, she hands him a book; and Hermas is directed to bring this book to Clement, the head of the Church of Rome, who will see that it reaches "the cities abroad."⁸⁴

The *Shepherd* of Hermas spread rapidly among the faithful. Its diffusion is attested by St. Irenaeus, Tertullian, St. Cyprian, by several Latin versions, and by an Ethiopic version. Some churches even included it, with the Epistle of St. Clement to the Corinthians, in the canon of their sacred books.

Apologetic Writings of St. Justin

The moral anguish that distressed the souls of Christians quieted down little by little. But many cultivated minds were anxious about another problem. Nearly all scholarly men of the time of Marcus Aurelius were enamored of philosophy. A few apologists there were who thought they could venture to

refuted by d'Alès in *Études*, 1912, pp. 87 ff.; cf. d'Alès, "*La Discipline pénitentielle au II^e siècle en dehors d'Hermas*," in the *Recherches de science religieuse*, May-June, 1913, pp. 201 ff.

⁸⁰ *Visions*, II, iv, 1. Cf. I, i, 6; III, iii, 3-5.

⁸¹ *Similitudes*, IX, xii, 1, 7 f.

⁸² *Visions*, II, ii, 6; II, iv, 3; III, v, 1.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, III, ix, 7-10.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, II, iv, 3. Why this mention of Clement of Rome, since Hermas wrote under the pontificate of Pius, his own brother? Some have supposed that Hermas merely reëdited and amplified an earlier work, going back to the pontificate of St. Clement, and several times revised and reëdited. Others think that he wished to give his work an appearance of age. Did not the great Pope Clement of Rome personify the papacy? It has been noted, moreover, that the description of the hierarchy, as given in the *Shepherd*, also refers to an earlier epoch.

present Christianity as a "new philosophy." But what connection was there between this and the old philosophies? In what was it separated from them? What were its constituent elements and its tenets? Could a synthesis of it be presented that would be understood by a follower of the Greek philosophers? Justin the Philosopher made it his duty to undertake the formidable task of replying to these questions.

Hermas probably was a priest. Justin was a layman,⁸⁵ but he had delved into the teachings of the Church. He even opened a sort of theological school at Rome. His noble attempt at a synthesis is not without inexactitudes and even errors, but this first essay of religious philosophy exercised an immense influence over the minds of his and of the next century.

The publication of Justin's first apology is generally placed at about the year 150. The second made its appearance a few years later, about 155,⁸⁶ and the *Dialogue with Trypho* some few years after that, about 160.⁸⁷

If we separate the philosophic doctrine from what is purely discussion, arguments *ad hominem*, and claims for actual rights, it can be reduced to this: Christianity is the true religion because it is the universal and absolute religion. Although the Word is fully manifested in Christ, yet the ancient world, everywhere and in all ages, possessed the seed of it.⁸⁸ The great day of the Incarnation was preceded by a vast and brightening dawn.

As a basis for his contention, Justin takes two sacred sayings. One is from St. Paul: "When the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature those things that are of the law, these having not the law are a law to themselves . . . their con-

⁸⁵ Bardenhewer, *Les Pères de l'Eglise* (French trans.), I, 147.

⁸⁶ Pantigny, *Justin, Apologies, texte et tradition*, Paris, 1904, pp. xii f.

⁸⁷ Archambault, *Justin, Dialogue*, Paris, 1909, I, lxxxiv.

⁸⁸ This is what St. Justin calls λόγος σπερματικός, σπέρμα τοῦ λόγου. (*Second Apology*, 8.)

science bearing witness to them.”⁸⁹ The other is from St. John: “[The Word is] the true light, which enlighteneth every man.”⁹⁰

He says: “All men are partakers of the Divine Word; its seed is implanted in their soul.”⁹¹ “This germinal understanding comes from the Word; by virtue of it the wise men of old were, from time to time, able to teach beautiful truths. . . . For, whatever good the philosophers and lawmakers said, they owed to a partial view or knowledge of the Word. . . . Socrates, for instance, knew Christ in a certain way, because the Word penetrates everything with His influence. . . . Therefore, too, Plato’s doctrines are not altogether contrary to those of Christ, although not absolutely like them, as may also be said of the teachings of the Stoics, the poets, and the historians. . . . So we may say that whatever good the ancients had belongs to us, to us Christians. . . . Besides, all who have lived according to the Word are Christians, even though they have been regarded as atheists: such were Socrates and Heraclitus among the Greeks, and, among others, Abraham, Ananias, Azarias, Misael, and Elías, besides many more. . . . As they knew the Word only in part, they did not have that lofty knowledge, free from all blame, which is our portion. Therefore was the Word made man. . . . It is one thing to possess only a seed of the Word; quite another thing is it to possess the Word Himself, who is communicated to us by His grace.”⁹²

Freppel, after summing up St. Justin’s theory of the Word, says: “Such is that enlightening and fruitful doctrine which at the school of Alexandria will presently open those great vis-

⁸⁹ Rom. 2: 14 f.

⁹⁰ John 1: 9.

⁹¹ *Second Apology*, 8. The summary we here give of St. Justin’s doctrine about the Word is taken from Freppel, *Les Apologues chrétiens du II^e siècle*, p. 327. It is composed of textual quotations from St. Justin.

⁹² *First Apology*, 46; *Second Apology*, 8, 16, 13, 14. (Freppel, *loc. cit.*)

tas into which Clement and Origen will rush with daring and not without some danger. It is a whole programme of Christian philosophy, embracing the theory of human knowledge, the intellectual constitution of the ancient world, and its relations with Christianity."⁹³

Justin considers humanity as a great unit, with its different parts brought together by Christ, who is the center and the soul of it all.⁹⁴ Yet he does not hold that natural reason is sufficient for the possession of saving grace, or that it is absolutely sufficient even when aided by interior grace, to the exclusion of any external revelation. No one more forcibly shows the eminent part of external revelation in the genesis of faith than Justin. He even admits a direct influence of the books of Moses upon the teaching of the Greek philosophers and seems to attribute to revealed faith alone whatever truth Hellenic wisdom possessed. In short, his expressions have not all the exactness we might wish. If some of them may be interpreted in the sense of an unorthodox "subjectivism," others seem, on the contrary, to be inspired by a suspect "extrinsicism." In an admirably majestic attempt Justin wished to include all the objective and subjective elements of a belief to which he clung with loyal submission, without surrendering any of the rights of his philosophic reason. But at times this proved an impossible task for him, or at least, in the exposition of the Catholic faith he did not find those precise expressions which the Church, aided by the Holy Ghost, was to employ later.⁹⁵

Some defects of expression and of thought, still more striking and no less explicable, are to be noted in Justin's writings when he speaks of the Trinity, the angels, and the end of the

⁹³ Freppel, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

⁹⁴ Conformable to the words of Scripture: "Jesus Christ, yesterday and today; and the same forever" (Heb. 13:8); "by Him all things consist" (Coloss. 1:17).

⁹⁵ See Freppel, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-227.

world. He clearly teaches the existence of one only God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Neophytes, he says, are baptized in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit."⁹⁶ "In all the offerings that we make, we bless the Creator of the universe through his Son Jesus Christ and through the Holy Ghost." In these words, Justin merely purposes expressing and professing the faith of the Church, and he is quite orthodox. But when he attempts a philosophical explanation, he, like Hermas, expresses himself in terms which the later decisions of the Church would no longer allow to be used. Between the Father and the Son, he seems to admit a certain subordination, hard to understand, in the perfect unity of will and divine essence.⁹⁷ He supposes the angels have an airy body; and he says: "Although many true Christians think otherwise . . . I am assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead that will last a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be rebuilt."⁹⁸ In other words, he professes Millenarianism as a private opinion.

When Justin speaks as a philosopher, his assertions can be accepted only with reservation.⁹⁹ But they should be accepted

⁹⁶ *First Apology*, 61; cf. *Dialogue*, 56, 60, 126, 127; *First Apology*, 13.

⁹⁷ On Justin's subordinationism, see Tixeront, *History of Dogmas*, I, 220 f.

⁹⁸ *Dialogue*, 80.

⁹⁹ Puech (*Les Apologistes grecs du II^e siècle*) proves that, although St. Justin and the other apologists of that period sought to express Christian doctrine in the philosophical language of their time, they are not thereby philosophers after the manner of the pagans. They are, first of all, Christians, disciples of Jesus, going first to the Gospels in their quest of truth. Puech thus concludes his study: "What they ask us to accept is a revelation interpreted by reason; but it is first a revelation." (*Op. cit.*, p. 307.) The most important work on St. Justin's theology is A. Feder, S.J., *Justins des Martyrs Lehre von Jesus Christus, dem Messias und dem menschengewordenen Sohne Gottes*, Freiburg i. B., 1906. In agreement with Petau, Newman, and Duchesne, Feder says that "he cannot help seeing in Justin's expressions certain traces of moderate subordinationism which, though rejecting Arianism, places restrictions on the perfect equality of nature or implies a dependence of the person." Justin's comparative silence about the nature of the Third Person of the Trinity is to be explained, says Feder, by the purpose of his writings.

with the greatest veneration when he speaks as a witness of the faith of the Church. In this capacity, his testimony on the sacrifice of the Eucharist is one of the most precious bequeathed to us by Christian antiquity.

Until his time, the "Discipline of the Secret," as it was later called, did not permit this holiest of mysteries to be divulged. But Justin, considering it necessary to have the pagans see Christianity with its whole economy of doctrines, ceremonies, and moral practices, could not conceal the fact that the Eucharist was the center of all these. Moreover, the people and even the philosophers had too long believed, or pretended to believe, that the Christians' secret was a cloak for some shameful practices. Justin considered that the time had come to disclose everything.

The following are the two famous passages in which the Christian philosopher for the first time reveals to the whole public the sacred ceremonies of the Eucharistic sacrifice:

"Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss of peace. There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water. And he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being accounted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen. This word Amen answers in the Hebrew language to *γένοιτο* [so be it]. And when the president has made the eucharist, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion. And this food is called among us Eucharistia [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the

remission of sins and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Savior, having been made flesh by the word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread and, when He had given thanks, said, 'This do ye in remembrance of Me, this is My body'; and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, 'This is My blood.' And He gave it to them alone."

This is the apologist's first description of the Mass. But, as though he feared not to have sufficiently described this supreme act of religion, he returns to the subject a few lines further on:

"On the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together in one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits. Then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings with all the earnestness of his soul, and the people assent, saying Amen. And there is a distribution of the consecrated Eucharist to each, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well-to-do and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows, and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on

which God made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead.”¹⁰⁰

“In this account,” says Freppel, “it is easy to recognize the sacrifice of the Mass in all its essential or integral parts: the offertory, the consecration, and the communion. A single officiant with deacons, the reading of a portion of the Old or New Testament, an exhortation to the people based on the passage read, the offering of bread and wine (with water added) as the matter for use in the sacrifice, thanksgiving offered to God by the presiding officer, and hymns of praise in which the whole assembly joins, a lengthy prayer by the celebrant alone, during which he consecrates the offerings by the Savior’s own words, the changing of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, again prayers of thanksgiving interrupted by the people’s acclaim, expressing by a word their participation in the act performed by the celebrant, the kiss of peace (a public sign of Christian brotherhood), communion distributed to those present and brought by the deacons to the sick and others who are absent, a collection for the benefit of the poor: this whole picture of the Christian liturgy in the middle of the second century is evidently that of the sacrifice of the Mass as it is celebrated today all over the world. St. Justin’s description corresponds point by point with the great central act of Catholic worship. It would be difficult to imagine a more impressive condemnation of Protestantism than this testimony by one of the earliest apologists of the Christian religion.”¹⁰¹ We know that Justin’s

¹⁰⁰ *First Apology*, 65, 66, 67.

¹⁰¹ Freppel, *op. cit.*, p. 304. Various scholarly works supplement the description given by St. Justin. Comparing this description with the few indications to be found in the *Didache* and in the *Epistle of St. Clement*, and with the various archeological and liturgical monuments that have been brought to light, we can reconstruct, in its main lines, the history of the ceremonies of the Mass. The short account taken from the Gospel, which in the Roman rite extends from the words “*Qui pridie*” to the words “*Hoc facite in meam commemorationem*,” i. e., the account of the first con-

courageous plea did not stop the course of the persecution and did not prevent his own martyrdom. But his work was none the less fruitful. Certain calumnies could no longer be repeated against the Christians except by people who were in bad faith. It was thenceforth established that Christian thought could fearlessly enter the domain of philosophy and count for something there.¹⁰²

St. Irenaeus

Pagan philosophy, with its frontal attack upon Christianity, was one of the great dangers of the Church at the close of the second century. The Gnostic sects, employing the outward expressions and the formulas of the Christian spirit, tended to dissolve it; they were a peril no less serious. A new

secreation by Christ at the Last Supper, formed what might be called the nucleus of the Mass, nay, of the whole liturgy. The first Christians, as a preparation for the renewal of the Savior's great act, following His example, adopted the ritual which governed the Jewish religious assemblies, consisting of the reading of selected passages of the Bible, the singing of psalms, a sermon, and a closing prayer. They added merely the reading of the Apostolic Epistles and of the Gospels, after these had been written. This was the origin of that part which liturgists call the Mass of the Catechumens. After the dismissal of the catechumens, the real Mass began. The priest first praised God the Father, Creator of all things. This was the origin of the Preface and Sanctus. Next, the recital of the Last Supper recalled the Incarnation of God the Son, and His Passion, followed by His glorious Resurrection. An invocation to the Spirit, the Sanctifier, or *Epiklesis*, concluded the rite of homage to the Holy Trinity. There remained the communion of the faithful; this was preceded by the Lord's Prayer and followed by a prayer of thanksgiving. Thus the whole fabric of the Mass was fixed. It is to be noted, however, that in the primitive Mass, only two parts were unchangeable: the recital of the Last Supper and the Lord's Prayer. Outside these two portions, the priest improvised as his piety suggested. This original freedom very soon was replaced by determined rites. In the East, these rites assumed a fixed type; the West, on the contrary, offered a great variety, manifested by the Milanese, African, Hispano-Gothic (or Mozarabic), Celtic, and Gallican liturgies. But in all this liturgical variety the account of the Last Supper always remained the nucleus. Of all the developments which the liturgy has taken in the course of the ages, if we are to believe the liturgists, there was not one which was not connected with that first account. (Cf. Vigourel, *Cours synthétique de liturgie*, Paris, 1904, and *La Liturgie et la vie chrétienne*, Paris, 1909.)

¹⁰² Rivière, *Saint Justin et les apologistes du II^e siècle*, Paris, 1911.

apologist, St. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, saw the peril and averted it.

The priest who in 177 was chosen to succeed the glorious martyr St. Pothinus in the see of Lyons, was born at Smyrna or in the neighborhood of that city about 130. The relations which he had in his youth with Polycarp, the illustrious bishop of Smyrna, and with the venerable Papias, his extensive literary culture, and his lofty virtue soon made him conspicuous among the clergy of Lyons. While Pothinus was bishop, the clergy of Lyons sent Irenaeus to Rome to Pope Eleutherius as their representative to treat of important matters, commending him as "zealous for the covenant of Christ."¹⁰³ We know almost nothing of his episcopal ministry or his death. In one passage St. Jerome gives him the title of "martyr." His death must have taken place during the persecution of Septimius Severus in 202. But his strife against false Gnosticism, the chief object of his zeal, would suffice to make him illustrious and venerable among all the bishops of old Gaul; his treatise *Against Heresies* is an imperishable monument.¹⁰⁴ In this book the entire heretical movement of the second century lives again before our eyes, as does the whole Protestant revolt in Bossuet's *History of the Variations of the Protestant Churches*.

Gnosticism, in passing from the schools of Basilides, Carpocrates, and Valentinus to those of their first disciples, greatly degenerated. Or rather, these latter logically deduced the fatal consequences inherent in the primitive teaching. The fancies of a whimsical metaphysics brought forth the eccentricities of a capricious morality. Secundus, looking for the

¹⁰³ Eusebius, *H. E.*, V, iv, 2.

¹⁰⁴ The real title of the work is, *The Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge (Gnosis) so-called*. But it is usually cited by the briefer title, *Adversus haereses*. St. Irenaeus' work was written in Greek, but we possess it only in an old Latin translation.

origin of evil, did not stop with Achamoth; he went back to the very womb of the Pleroma. Marcus introduced into his system the speculations of the Cabala. The Ophites, in a complicated doctrine that absorbed all the others in the third century, explained the whole system of the world by the conflict between a mysterious serpent (Ophis) and the Creator (Jaldabaoth), so as to bring man nearer to the good and inaccessible God. The Cainites, exalting strength, even in evil, peopled their Olympus with all the scoundrels who had dishonored mankind, from Cain to Judas. Some Gnostics, it is true, tried to stem the movement that was carrying the new sect toward every revolt and depravity. But no great results came of the efforts made in this direction, whether by Ptolemy, a philosopher of clean and exact mind, or by Theodotus and Alexander, whose souls were really enamored of moral purification and asceticism. One important branch of the Gnostic sect had a tendency "towards the most abominable moral aberrations."¹⁰⁵

The early Fathers, and St. Irenaeus first of all, compare with the masters of Gnosticism a certain man who had started out from an altogether opposite point of view, but then espoused their theories and even claimed to work out a clearer and more exact system from them. This man was Marcion.

Marcion was born at Sinope on the Black Sea. After making a fortune at sea, he came to Rome about 140 and presented the Roman Church with a large sum of money, two hundred sesterces (about \$8,000).¹⁰⁶ Marcion's first idea was to react against that mixture of Christianity and gross Judaism which the founders of Gnosticism professed. "But since the soundness of his judgment did not equal the warmth of his convictions, his zeal carried him beyond the bounds of moderation and truth. Like Luther, whom he strikingly resembles, he

¹⁰⁵ Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 141.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 134.

ended by attacking dogma, on the pretext of wishing to correct an abuse.”¹⁰⁷ The antithesis which St. Paul points out between the faith and the Law, between the Old Testament and the New, Marcion considers a radical antagonism. In a book which he published under the title of *Antitheses*, he says that from this opposition it follows that the God of the Gospel, the Father of mercies, must be the enemy of the God of the Jews, author of the creation and of the Law. Thus, by an altogether different route, Marcion arrives at the dualism of the Gnostics. He says that certainly the purpose of Redemption is to rescue man from the evil work of creation; but the good God who became incarnate, unwilling to owe anything to the Creator, possessed only an appearance of humanity. By this second notion Marcion, after cursing the Creator and the Law, finally “evaporates the Gospel history into an absolute Docetism.”¹⁰⁸

These are the doctrines which the Bishop of Lyons unmasks and refutes. We will not attempt to follow this “very exact inquirer into all doctrines,” as Tertullian calls him,¹⁰⁹ in his inquiries and arguments. In the words of one of his most discerning interpreters, we will give a brief summary of his great treatise. With pliant but close reasoning Irenaeus shows that the Gnostics are driven to one or other of two final explanations: dualism or pantheism. “He pursued them into these two last intrenchments. You cut God off from the world, he said, or you confuse God with the world; in either case you destroy the true notion of God. If you put creation outside of God, whatever name you give to eternal matter—Void, Chaos, Darkness—is unimportant; you limit the divine Being. This is tantamount to denying Him. There is no use in your saying that the world may have been formed by angels. Either they

¹⁰⁷ Freppel, *Saint Irénée*, p. 287.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 185.

¹⁰⁹ Tertullian, *Adversus Valentinianos*, 5.

acted against the will of the supreme God, or according to His command. On the first hypothesis, you accuse God of powerlessness; on the second, in spite of yourselves you are brought to the Christian doctrine, which considers the angels as instruments of the divine will. If, on the contrary, you place creation in God, in such a way that it is reduced to a mere development of His substance, you enter upon a path even more inextricable. In this case whatever imperfections and defilements there are in creatures become transferred to God Himself, whose substance becomes theirs. You say that the world is the fruit of ignorance and sin, the result of a failing or a fall of the Pleroma, a progressive degeneration of the Being, or, to use your favorite metaphor, a stain on the tunic of God. But do you not see, in this confusion of the Infinite with the finite, it is the divine nature itself that declines, that degenerates, that is stained with vice or imperfection? Could the notion of God be more seriously altered?" ¹¹⁰

But the holy Bishop is not satisfied with refuting the error. Desirous of giving his readers the rule of faith by which every particular opinion must be judged, he then sets forth the whole Catholic doctrine in a great synthesis. In so doing, St. Irenaeus is not merely an apologist, he is also a theologian: in fact, he may rightly be called the father of Catholic theology.

The rule of faith laid down by St. Irenaeus is clear and sound. Religious truth is found in the tradition of the Church: this is the sum and substance of his doctrine. The genuineness of the faith of the present is proved by the fact that those who now teach it received it from the Apostles. Its absolute infallibility is guaranteed by the indefectible assistance of the Holy Ghost. We quote some of the holy Bishop's own words. "The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world,

¹¹⁰ Freppel, *op. cit.*, p. 357. The exactness of Freppel's summary may be verified by reading the *Adversus haereses*, bk. 2, chap. 30.

even to the ends of the earth, has received from the Apostles and their disciples this faith.¹¹¹ . . . This is the unchangeable rule we receive at baptism.¹¹² . . . The only true and life-giving faith, the Church has received from the Apostles and imparted to her sons. For the Lord of all gave to His Apostles the power of the gospel, through whom also we have known the truth, that is, the doctrine of the Son of God; to whom also did the Lord declare: 'He that heareth you, heareth Me.'¹¹³ . . . The Church is the Church of God.¹¹⁴ . . . Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God."¹¹⁵ And the center of that Church is at Rome: "the very great, the very ancient and universally known Church, founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul"¹¹⁶ . . . , Rome, whose pastors are connected with the chief of the Apostles by an uninterrupted series of legitimate pontiffs;¹¹⁷ for it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church on account of its preëminent authority."¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ *Haereses*, I, x, 1.

¹¹² *Ibidem*, I, ix, 4.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, III, pref.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, I, vi, 3; xiii, 5.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, III, i, 1.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*, III, iii, 2.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, III, iii, 2 f. It is especially from St. Irenaeus that we know the list of the first Roman pontiffs. Probably he took it from Hegesippus. (Cf. Michiels, *Origine de l'épiscopat*, pp. 303-336.)

¹¹⁸ "*Ad hanc enim Ecclesiam, propter potentioorem principalitatem necesse est omnem convenire Ecclesiam.*" (*Haereses*, III, iii, 2.) See an excellent commentary on this text, in Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, pp. 207-210. "It would be difficult," says Duchesne (*The Churches Separated from Rome*, p. 80), "to meet with a clearer assertion: (1) of unity of doctrine in the universal Church; (2) of the sole sovereign importance of the Church of Rome, as witness, guardian, and organ of the Apostolic tradition; (3) of her superior preëminence over the whole of Christianity." On the interpretation of this text, and especially of the words that follow, viz.: "*hoc est eos qui sunt undique fideles, in qua semper ab his qui sunt undique conservata est ea quae est ab apostolis traditio*," see Morin, *Revue bénédictine*, 1908, pp. 515 ff. Harnack, Duchesne, and Funk refer the words "*in qua*," not to the Roman Church, but to the other churches. Morin sets forth

After thus establishing the rule of faith of the Catholic Church, St. Irenaeus, in an ample synthesis, gives the essential content of that faith. The great Bishop's whole theology is inspired by these words of St. John: "This is eternal life: that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."¹¹⁹ Assuredly it is well to insist upon the infinite distance separating us from God; but in exalting His supreme Essence we must be careful that we do not make of Him the supreme Impotence and the supreme Indifference. By what right may we deny to the infinite Being the power of producing, outside of Himself, a world which, while not being He, depends upon Him in its operations and in its substance? We must rather hold to this dogma of creation, which, mysterious though it is, contains the only reasonable solution, because, distinguishing what must be neither separated nor confused, it escapes the two shoals of dualism and pantheism.

But not only did the infinite Being have the power of producing real creatures, He had the power of making Himself known to them, the power of redeeming them from their faults and their wretchedness, the power of raising them even to Himself by a sort of deification. The mediator of all these divine mysteries is Christ. Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of God incarnate, truly God¹²⁰ and truly man, is the Revealer of

with great clearness that "*sunt undique*," in the incidental clause, is a copyist's mistake: these two words take the place of others which designated the heads of the Church (*praesunt, sunt undecim?*). Hence there is no reason why we should not connect "*in qua*" with the Roman Church. Thus understood, the text, rendered still more striking homage to the primacy of the Apostolic See.

¹¹⁹ John 17:3.

¹²⁰ In St. Irenaeus there have been noted a few subordinationist expressions, i. e., favoring the theory of the Son's subordination to the Father; e. g., III, vi, 1; V, xviii, 2 f. But, in these passages, St. Irenaeus scarcely does more than repeat expressions of the Gospels and of St. Paul. Yet we must acknowledge that his expressions, like those of Hermas and St. Justin, lack the exactness that is found in the Fathers after the definitions of the Council of Nicaea. Even though St. Irenaeus can be freed from subordinationism, he cannot be freed from the millenarist error, which was doubtless owing to his excessive deference toward the

God,¹²¹ the Redeemer of man¹²² fallen in Adam,¹²³ and the Deificator of him who abandons himself to His grace.¹²⁴ These three ideas sum up the Christology of St. Irenaeus. That revelation, redemption, and deification produce their full effects only after this life, in the kingdom of glory, but in this life the Eucharist, where God and man meet and unite in an outpouring of unspeakable love, is the divine seal of the work of revelation, redemption, and deification.

Our exposition of St. Irenaeus' teaching would be incomplete if we failed to mention the large place he gives to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the economy of grace. St. Justin had already mentioned her effective and voluntary participation in the work of the Redemption. St. Irenaeus stresses the part taken by her. As St. Paul contrasted the work of the first Adam with that of the second Adam, Jesus Christ, so the Bishop of Lyons contrasts the first Eve, who brought about the fall, with the second Eve, Mary, who saved mankind. He says: "The knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. One resisted God's command, the other sub-

authority of Papias. (See Irenaeus, *Haereses*, V, xxviii; cf. Freppel, *op. cit.*, p. 486; Tixeront, *op. cit.*, I, 239.)

¹²¹ *Haereses*, III, v, 3.

¹²² *Ibidem*, III, xvi, 9; xviii, 1 f. On St. Irenaeus' explanation of the Redemption, see Rivière, *Histoire du dogme de la Rédemption*. Rivière shows that often St. Irenaeus' expressions have been interpreted in too narrow and literal a sense. "The prominence which he gives to Satan is for him a means of conceiving and expressing the laws of Divine Providence revealed to human reason by the economy of salvation." (Rivière, "*La Doctrine de saint Irénée sur le rôle du démon dans la Rédemption*," in the *Bulletin d'ancienne littérature et d'archéologie chrétienne*, 1911, pp. 169 ff.) Moreover, even should we have to consider more literally the question of man's redemption from the hands of the devil, and to admit that, according to St. Irenaeus, the devil has a positive part in the drama of the Redemption, this rôle, from beginning to end, would be that of usurper and impostor. We might say that justice is exercised from God to him, but "as it is exercised by a judge upon a robber whom he unmasks and forces to disgorge." This latter interpretation is offered by Galtier in the *Recherches de science religieuse*, 1911, pp. 1 ff.; 1912, pp. 345 ff.

¹²³ *Haereses*, V, xxxvi, 2.

¹²⁴ *Ibidem*, V, ii.

mitted thereto. Eve heeded the devil's words, Mary gave ear to the voice of the angel. As the human race fell into bondage to death by means of a virgin, so is it rescued by a virgin."¹²⁵

We cannot overemphasize the importance of the part taken by St. Irenaeus in the history of the Church. This first of Catholic theologians is the last pupil of the immediate disciples of the Apostles. He who made the first systematic synthesis of our faith had still in his ears the last echoes of the Apostolic teaching. His work is a golden ring joining the spirit of the Gospel to the teaching of the Fathers.¹²⁶

Tertullian

St. Irenaeus' treatise was a death-blow to the Gnostic heresy. Valentinianism, Marcionism, and Ophism survived the attack only by becoming transformed. Heracleon, Apelles, and, so far as concerns Ophism, an unknown theologian,¹²⁷ were the authors of these transformations, which somewhat delayed the final ruin of those sects. But the Church was still facing Judaism and paganism, ever menacing, ever ready to contend with her for souls, ever ready to combine with the remains of Gnosticism so as to give them a new life.

The defenders of Christianity were aware that repelling the enemies' attacks was not enough. A more important task was demanded of apologetics: utterly to destroy the wall of prejudice which the Jew and the pagan had set up against the Catholic Church; to enter upon the enemies' ground; to impress the masses by strong, alert, and animated works; to use the language of Cicero as well as that of Homer; to keep in mind the jurist and the scholar of Latin culture, as

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*, III, xxii, 4; V, xix. On this idea of devotion to Mary and the beginnings of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, see Newman, *Catholic Doctrine and Devotion with Respect to the Blessed Virgin*, a letter to Dr. Pusey, 1865.

¹²⁶ See Dufourcq, *Saint Irénée ("Les Saints")*, p. 184.

¹²⁷ De Faye, "Introduction à l'étude du gnosticisme" in *the Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 1902, p. 166.

well as the philosopher fed on Plato. In short, the new apologetics must be a conqueror, under pain of remaining ineffective. Tertullian, Minutius Felix, and the Greek author of the *Epistle to Diognetus* were the principal representatives of this school.

Tertullian, the son of a pagan centurion, was born at Carthage about 160. He was carefully educated, made a thorough study of the Greek language and of jurisprudence, and for some years practiced law.¹²⁸ Shortly before 197, he was converted to Christianity, and was soon afterwards ordained to the priesthood. He began at once to display an incredible activity against the enemies of the Church.

Tertullian was first of all a polemic. He was possessed of a vigorous mind, a rare scholarship, and perfect mastery of Latin, to which he added new words and phrases. He was quick in repartee and sharp in speech; but his reasoning is more dazzling than reliable, and his arguments are often inspired by passion. In one place he writes: "Unhappily I am always dominated by the fever of impatience."¹²⁹ "Like St. Justin, Tertullian experienced the strength and the weakness of many philosophies before settling down in the Christian faith."¹³⁰ But, whereas Justin retained some friendly feeling for the systems he had left, Tertullian never finds enough epithets with which to belabor the pagan philosophers, those mountebanks, those despisers of God and man,¹³¹ those patriarchs of heretics,¹³² those animals of glory."¹³³

A recent historian of Tertullian's philosophy¹³⁴ has been able, by utilizing the researches of Nöldechen and Monceaux,

¹²⁸ It is doubtful whether we should attribute to him the passages introduced in the Pandects under the name of Tertullian.

¹²⁹ Tertullian, *De patientia*, chap. 1.

¹³⁰ *Apol.*, 46.

¹³¹ *Ad nationes*, bk. 1, *passim*.

¹³² *De anima*, 3.

¹³³ *Ibidem*, 1. D'Alès, *La Théologie de Tertullien*, p. 2.

¹³⁴ D'Alès, *loc. cit.*

to determine with almost certain assurance the date of the first works of the celebrated African priest. It must have been in 197 that he wrote his *Ad nationes* and his *Apologeticus*; in 197 and 200, his *Testimony of the Soul*; about 200, his treatise *De praescriptione*.¹³⁵ The *Ad nationes* is an apology of the Christian religion addressed to the pagan nations; the *Apologeticus* is a plea addressed to the provincial magistrates of the Empire; the *De praescriptione*, his masterpiece, is directed against all heresies. Even in his first works Tertullian makes known his threefold purpose: to confound paganism, to refute Judaism, and to pursue the last remains of the Gnostic heresy.

Amid incomparable beauties, his apologetic contains regrettable gaps and dubious rashness. When he looks for a sincere testimony about man, we see that he too disdainfully rejects that of philosophy;¹³⁶ but with vigor and penetration he analyzes the deep aspirations of what he calls the soul of the artless man. "These testimonies of the soul are simple as true, commonplace as simple, universal as commonplace, natural as universal, divine as natural."¹³⁷ . . . That which is derived from God is rather obscured than extinguished. It bears testimony to God [its author] in exclamations such as: 'Good God! God knows!' etc. . . . Therefore, when the soul embraces the faith . . . it beholds the light in all its brightness."¹³⁸

But it would be wrong to suppose that in proposing a way to lead souls to the faith, Tertullian despises reason.¹³⁹ The very center of his whole argument is the divinity of Christ.

¹³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. xiii.

¹³⁶ *De testimonio animae*, I.

¹³⁷ *Ibidem*, 5.

¹³⁸ *De anima*, 41.

¹³⁹ On the assertions to this effect by Guignebert (*Tertullien*, p. 256) and Courdaveaux (*Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 1891, XXIII, 1 ff.); see d'Alès, *op. cit.*, p. 34, and Cabrol in *Science catholique*, 1891.

For this he appeals to three proofs: the testimony of the Old Testament prophecies, of the Gospel miracles, and of the annals of the early Church.¹⁴⁰ In the paradoxical exaltation of his high-minded fervor, he does indeed boast of the abasements in the Gospel and of the scandal of reason, going so far as to write, if not, "*Credo quia absurdum*" (I believe, because it is absurd), which is neither his nor St. Augustine's, at least an equivalent phrase, "*Credibile est quia ineptum; certum est quia impossibile.*"¹⁴¹ He means that the object of faith is that which reason without revelation would not perceive as something fitting or possible. The fiery apologist is so ardently convinced, and feels his conviction so keenly, that he cannot imagine that the truth, so clear to him, does not appear equally clear to others. Yet he writes this sentence, worthy of a real psychologist: "Faith, destined to a great reward, is acquired only at the price of great labor."¹⁴²

The superb peroration of Tertullian's *Apologeticus* will illustrate his animated and captivating eloquence. "Your courts are battlefields where we contest for the truth. Sometimes death ensues. It is our victory over you. Sacrifice, excellent magistrates, sacrifice Christians; the mob will thank you. Torment, torture, condemn, grind; your injustice will reveal our innocence. Therefore does God let you go ahead. When your hand harvests us, we increase; the blood of Christians is a seed.¹⁴³ Your philosophers have made less disciples by their writings than Christians have by their example. People come to us out of curiosity; they join us through conviction; then they long to suffer that they may wash away their sins in their blood; for martyrdom wipes out everything. It is a

¹⁴⁰ These three proofs are analyzed in d'Alès, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-33.

¹⁴¹ *De carne Christi*, 5.

¹⁴² *Apol.*, 21.

¹⁴³ The exact wording of this oft-quoted text is: "*Semen est sanguis christianorum.*" (*Apol.*, 4.)

strange contrast between things divine and things human: when you condemn us, God absolves us."

In his *Ad nationes*, in the *Testimony of the Soul*, and in the *Apologeticus*, Tertullian has pagans and Jews in mind; his *De praescriptione* is addressed to the heretics.

With marvelous penetration, Tertullian conceives two ways of refuting heresies: an analytical method, resting on a detailed discussion of texts and points of doctrine; a synthetic method, settling the question as a whole by the simple establishing of a fact. He later uses the first method, in defending the idea of God against the dualism of Marcion and the pantheism of Valentinus and the idea of creation against the doctrine of Hermogenes. But first he wishes to show how all heresy, that is, every doctrine resting on individual choice (*hairesis*), on unrestrained inquiry, may be averted by a preliminary question. Tertullian makes appeal to his knowledge of the law. He knows that before the courts there are nice points of non-acceptance, of *exceptions*, as the Roman law calls them, among which the principal one is *prescription*, peremptory exception by which a possessor, under certain conditions, without any other procedure, sets aside any claim of a third party to his property. Tertullian pleads prescription against every heresy, whatever it may be.

He takes his start from a series of undeniable facts, namely, that Christ has entrusted His teaching to His Apostles, that the latter have handed it on to the churches they founded, and that from these Apostolic churches have sprung all the others, like shoots inseparable from their common stock. In other words, the method instituted by Christ for the spread of His teaching is tradition, and the authentic organ of that tradition is the Church, in so far as it is connected with the Apostles by an uninterrupted chain. Hence no one is allowed to appeal to his own personal interpretation against her. Tertullian

says: "Who are you? When and whence did you come? As you are none of mine, what have you to do with that which is mine? Indeed, Marcion, by what right do you hew my wood? By whose permission, Valentinus, are you diverting the streams of my fountain? This is my property. I have long possessed it. I am the heir of the Apostles."¹⁴⁴

We can scarcely imagine a more overwhelming fervor. This very fervor does at times speak in rough, bitter tones, in which passion has too great a part. In his *De spectaculis*, which appeared about 200, the "severe African" cannot suppress his satisfaction at the thought of the future punishment of the persecutors. "What a spectacle is that fast-approaching advent of our Lord," he says, "now owned by all, now highly exalted, now a triumphant One. . . . What there excites my admiration? Which sight gives me joy? Which arouses me to exultation?—as I see so many illustrious monarchs, whose reception into the heavens was publicly announced, groaning now in the lowest darkness. . . . Governors of provinces, too, who persecuted the Christian name, in fires more fierce than those with which in the days of their pride they raged against the followers of Christ! What world's wise men besides, the very philosophers now covered with shame! Poets also trembling before the judgment-seat of Christ. The tragedians, louder voiced in their own calamity, the play-actors, much more 'dissolute' in the dissolving flame."¹⁴⁵

Minutius Felix

Christian apologetics strikes a gentler note with the *Octavius* of Minutius Felix and the *Epistle to Diognetus*.

Was Tertullian's *Apologeticus* published before or after the *Octavius*? Critical study has not yet found a definite answer to this question, but it has concluded that the latter work

¹⁴⁴ *De praescriptione*, 37.

¹⁴⁵ *De spectaculis*, 30.

was written in the last years of the second century. It is in the form of a dialogue. Its author, like Tertullian, was a lawyer and perhaps an African. But there is a contrast between the two. Minutius Felix avoids whatever may be offensive to the prejudices of the pagan scholars he is addressing. He lays stress on the depravity of polytheism and clears Christianity of the calumnies heaped upon it. But to establish his arguments he appeals to the wise men of Greece and Rome rather than to the sacred writers. The mysteries of the Christian faith are left in the background. The author's aim is not to bring his reader into the interior of the temple, but to facilitate the approach to it. Even when most sharply criticizing the pagan horrors, his words breathe a contagious mildness. Its artistic composition and elegant style have given this little dialogue the title of "the pearl of Christian apologetics." The best profane writers of the second century—Frontinus, Aulus Gellius, Apuleius—cannot refuse the author of *Octavius* a place in the foremost ranks.¹⁴⁶

The Letter to Diognetus

The same charm of style and the same gentleness are to be found in another small work, written in Greek, by an unknown author and at a date that can be determined only approximately. Probably it should be put at the close of the second century or, as Zeller and Funk think, in the first years of the third. The work is the *Epistle to Diognetus*.¹⁴⁷

The author's principal argument consists in describing the supernatural life led by true Christians, then in showing how the Church, the depositary of the treasure of Revelation and

¹⁴⁶ A scholarly and critical edition of *Octavius* is that by Waltzing, Leipsic, 1912.

¹⁴⁷ The manuscript in which the *Letter to Diognetus* was preserved, and which was destroyed in the siege of Strasbourg in 1870, dated only from the thirteenth century. On the date of composition, see Funk, *Patres apostolici*, I, cxiii; cf. Bardenhewer, *Patrology*, p. 68.

dispenser of grace through the Sacraments, is not merely the divinely organized "economy" for the sanctification of a chosen few, but also, either by the radiant influence of its virtues or by the blessings it draws down upon the world, an instrument of salvation for all mankind. With fine depth of thought, the writer says: "To speak simply, what the soul is in the body, Christians are in the world. . . . The flesh detests the soul and makes war upon it, because it is prevented by the soul from indulging freely in pleasure; the world for the same reason detests Christians. . . . The soul is confined in the body, and does itself hold the body in check; the Christians are in the world as in a prison, and they restrain the world." ¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ *Letter to Diognetus*, VI, 1, 5-7.

CHAPTER III

Christian Life at the Beginning of the Third Century

WHILE Christian apologetics was speaking in tones of confidence, the Church was enjoying comparative freedom. The last six years of Emperor Commodus and the first nine years of Septimius Severus were a time of peace. She profited thereby to develop her hierarchical, sacramental, and liturgical institutions, to complete the organization of Church property, to promote the study of theology, and to give a new impulse to her Apostolic expansion. We have now reached the point where we should take a general view of this internal activity of the Church. And then we shall have to resume the story of her struggles against persecution and heresy.

The Hierarchy

Tertullian's works show us the Church as an essentially graded society. The laity are subject to the deacons and priests, and all owe obedience to the bishop.¹ No longer is there any mention of the presbyterial council. The monarchical episcopate is established everywhere. The lists of bishops which the historian Hegesippus gives in the middle of the second century leave no doubt on this point.² The bishop's authority comes from the fact that he is the depositary of Apostolic authority, handed down to him through an uninterrupted series of bishops connected with the Apostles.³ Unlike the Apostles,

¹ *De praescriptione*, 32.

² Our knowledge of Hegesippus we owe to Eusebius' quotations in the first books of the *Ecclesiastical History*.

³ Irenaeus, *Haereses*, III, ii, 2; Tertullian, *De praescr.*, 32.

the bishop has a limited territory, first called a "parish," later a "diocese." The first bishops were chosen and instituted by the Apostles; but at an early date it became the custom to nominate bishops by election. When a see became vacant, the lower clergy of the diocese met and elected one of their number, after obtaining from the people a good testimony in favor of the candidate. Then they presented this candidate to the bishops of the neighborhood, who assembled in the principal city of the vacant diocese to preside at the election and to give canonical institution to the bishop-elect.⁴ The documents of the second century and of the early third show us the bishop administering his diocese in complete independence of the lower clergy. Yet in many instances he takes counsel of them and sometimes even asks the advice of the people.⁵

Simple priests and deacons, unlike bishops, are promoted to Orders only upon the good testimony of the people. They can exercise no function without the approval of the bishop who ordained them;⁶ in case of serious fault, they can be deposed by the bishop.⁷ They are his helpers in the work of instructing the faithful and in the administration of the Sacraments. At the meetings of the Christian community they take their places around the bishop, as it were his crown. While the episcopal see is vacant, they assume charge of the administration of the diocese and render an account of their administration to the new bishop.⁸

The duties of deacons are: to preach, baptize, and under the bishop's control to administer the property of the Church, to serve the bishop at the altar, to announce the meetings of

⁴ Tertullian, *Apol.*, 39; St. Cyprian, *Letters*, 38 f., 67 (*alias* 78); Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, xliii.

⁵ St. Cyprian, *Letters*, 14, 34, 39.

⁶ Tertullian, *De baptismo*, 17; St. Ignatius, *Smyrnaeans*, 8.

⁷ Tertullian, *De baptismo*, 18.

⁸ St. Cyprian, *Letters*, 30-36.

the faithful, to maintain order, to receive the offerings of the faithful and to divide them among the poor.⁹

Virginity, so earnestly recommended by St. Paul and exemplified by the Savior, His blessed Mother, and the Apostle St. John, is the ideal which the faithful, and especially the clergy, endeavor to approach. But as yet it is not made obligatory upon the clergy by any positive rule. The imperial laws forbidding celibacy placed too great an obstacle in the way of recruiting the clergy if celibacy were made a strict obligation. The only requirement is that, following the precept of the Apostle,¹⁰ the candidate for the clerical state be not twice married.¹¹

Baptism

Initiation into the Christian life was by Baptism, preceded by the catechumenate, and immediately followed by Confirmation and participation in the Holy Eucharist. When a pagan, disillusioned from the mysteries of his religion or touched by the courage of the martyrs or by the example of Christian virtues, comes to the bishop to ask for a share in the Christian mysteries, the bishop first makes him undergo a probation, vaguely mentioned by Hermas¹² and St. Justin,¹³ clearly organized in the time of Tertullian,¹⁴ and called the catechumenate. For several days the postulant remains at the entrance

⁹ St. Justin, *Apology*, I, 65; St. Ignatius, *Trallians*, 2.

¹⁰ I Cor. 4:12; 9:7 ff.; Acts 20:34.

¹¹ Sabatier takes up a theory already maintained by Renan and Ritschl, and holds that the Catholic Church was hierarchically constituted and became a Church of authority only by reaction against the Gnostic movement. (*Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit*, pp. 32 ff., and *passim*.) The whole history of the first two centuries, as we have just recounted it, protests against such an assertion. A direct refutation may be found in Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, pp. 143-163, 210-217.

¹² Hermas, *Visions*, III, vii, 3.

¹³ *First Apology*, 61.

¹⁴ *De praescr.*, 41. Tertullian's *De poenitentia* was addressed to catechumens.

to the Christian meeting during the celebration of the mysteries, for, right after the first prayers, the deacons exclude the catechumens. But the Church gives him instruction apart.¹⁵ She then requires that he "renounce the devil and his pomp and his angels,"¹⁶ that he prepare for the solemn initiation by prayer, fasting, vigils, and confession of his sins.¹⁷ Such at least was the rule at Carthage, as described by Tertullian. He says that the Church is thus exacting with the candidate for Baptism in order to be assured that he will not fall back into sin once he is baptized.¹⁸ The Church should be composed only of saints.

Then comes the day of Baptism, "illumination," "reconciliation," "palingenesis" (new birth) as it is called.¹⁹ Regularly the candidate is dipped three times in the water, in memory of Christ's burial; his threefold coming out of the water symbolizes the mystery of the Resurrection. At each immersion the name of one of the three divine persons is pronounced.²⁰ In case of necessity, however, especially in case of sickness, Baptism was conferred by sprinkling or pouring. Some paintings of the third century depict ceremonies which may go back to the end of the second century, showing the candidate standing in the baptistry, with the water reaching to his knees, and being sprinkled on the head.²¹

The days especially reserved for the initiation of the catechumens are the Saturday before Easter and the Saturday before Pentecost, but Tertullian declares that, strictly speaking, Baptism may be conferred on any Sunday or even on any ordinary day.²²

¹⁵ *Idem, De baptismo*, 1.

¹⁶ *Idem, De corona militis*, 3.

¹⁷ *Idem, De baptismo*, 20.

¹⁸ *Idem, De poenitentia*, 6; *De baptismo*, 20.

¹⁹ Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, I, 6.

²⁰ On the triple immersion, see Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean*, 26.

²¹ De Rossi, *Roma sotterranea*, II, 334.

²² Tertullian, *De baptismo*, 19.

When the baptismal ceremony is over, the new Christian is clothed in a white garment and introduced into the assembly of the faithful. The bishop, seated, presides at the meeting. The priests, at the bishop's side, and the deacons, whose duty it is to maintain order, are the only ones occupying places of honor. The rich are shoulder to shoulder with the poor, the freemen with the slaves. The newly initiated comes up to the bishop. The head of the Church, by the imposition of hands and anointing with holy chrism, confers on him the Sacrament of Confirmation, which makes him a perfect Christian and is looked upon as the complement of Baptism.²³

At length the newly baptized is admitted to participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice. We have already given St. Justin's description of the principal ceremonies of this rite. Passages from Tertullian, St. Cyprian, and the canons of Hippolytus²⁴ enable us to complete the picture. From the middle of the second century the "breaking of bread" is finally separated from the fraternal meal which accompanied it. The sacred function henceforth appears in all the purity of its rite, free from the abuses that so greatly afflicted St. Paul. We can easily imagine the neophyte's feeling when for the first time he was present at the mystery so long awaited.

A movement among the deacons and inferior ministers is a sign that the sacrifice is about to begin. Some go among the assembled faithful to see that each one stays in his proper place and to direct the liturgical acts; the others place on the

²³ On Confirmation, see St. Irenaeus, *Haereses*, IV, xxxviii, 2; Tertullian, *De baptismo*, 7 f.; St. Cyprian, *Letters*, 73. The Sacrament of Confirmation is sometimes called *consignatio*. This word is used in the *Gelasian Sacramentary*.

²⁴ The authority of Tertullian and St. Cyprian is well known. As to the Canons of Hippolytus, Batiffol says, "we possess no more complete and explicit description of the institutions of the early Church: it is a document of the highest rank." (*Anciennes littératures chrétiennes*, p. 158.) Save for a few easily recognized retouchings, the Canons of Hippolytus agree admirably with whatever we know about the liturgy in use at the beginning of the third century. (*Ibid.*)

altar the bread and the chalices prepared for the sacred repast.

"The Lord be with you all," says the bishop. "And with thy spirit," they respond. "Raise up your hearts," the bishop then says. To which they answer: "They are with the Lord." He continues: "It is fitting and just."

After several prayers, the chief of which is an invocation to the thrice holy God, the bishop, amid profound silence, slowly pronounces over the bread and wine the mysterious words first uttered by the Savior the night before He died. The mystery is consummated. Christ is on the altar, in the midst of His faithful, under the mystical veils of the consecrated elements. Again the prayer begins, more earnestly, addressed to the God here present, though invisible. Of a sudden a deacon's voice cries out: "*Sancta sanctis*" (holy things are for the holy). "Amen," the people respond. The bishop receives communion, then the priests and deacons, and lastly all those present. The bishop lays the consecrated bread in the communicant's right hand, which is open and held up by the left hand. The deacon holds the chalice, from which each one drinks directly. At each communion, the bishop says: "The body of Christ," and the deacon: "The blood of Christ." Each communicant responds "Amen."

When the communion is over, the deacon gives the signal for prayer. All pray, sometimes kneeling or even prostrate, in sign of humiliation and penance, sometimes standing up, with arms extended and the hands open like Jesus on the cross, to testify that they are ready to endure every suffering. Says Tertullian: "Thither [toward Heaven] we lift our eyes, with hands outstretched, because free from sin; with head uncovered, for we have nothing whereof to be ashamed. . . . With our hands thus stretched out and up to God, rend us with your iron claws, hang us up on crosses, wrap us in flames, take our heads from us with the sword, let loose the wild

beasts on us—the very attitude of a Christian praying is one of preparation for all punishment.”²⁵

The Sacrament of Penance

Such words well express the feelings that must have animated the neophyte when, on the day of his initiation, he received the threefold Sacrament. Is it possible now that this man, first prepared by so much fasting and prayer and then favored with so many graces, should ever offend the Lord?

We know that, in the time of Hermas, many Christians answered in the negative. Their faults are hardly subdued when they revive. But experience continues unfortunately to show the possibility of sinning even after Baptism. Precisely with these falls in view the Savior established another Sacrament, a “second penitence,” a “laborious Baptism,” as it is sometimes called—Penance. He instituted it the day He gave His Apostles and their successors the power “to remit and to retain sins.” At the beginning of the third century the Sacrament of Penance appears as an institution everywhere, but differently organized in different churches.

The *Canons of Hippolytus* place on the lips of a bishop consecrating another bishop these significant words: “Grant him, O Lord, the office of bishop, the spirit of clemency and the power of remitting sins.”²⁶ On the other hand, Tertullian explicitly teaches that the remission of sins is made by means of confession. He says: “This act, which is more usually expressed and commonly spoken of under a Greek name, is ἐξομολόγησις (exomologesis). . . . Of confession repentance is born; by repentance God is appeased.”²⁷ This pardon of sins,

²⁵ Tertullian, *Apol.*, 30. For more details, see Cabrol, *Le Livre de la prière antique*, chap. 8: “A Mass at Rome at the beginning of the third century,” pp. 90–118.

²⁶ Canon 17.

²⁷ *De poenitentia*, 9.

moreover, is applicable to all faults without exception. "To all sins committed, whether by flesh or spirit, whether by deed or will, the same God who has destined penalty by means of judgment, has withal engaged to grant pardon by means of repentance, saying to the people, 'Repent thee, and I will save thee.' " ²⁸

If now we seek to know what were the rules followed in the practice of confession and of the works of satisfaction that accompany it, we find ourselves in the presence of divergent practices. Certain churches show themselves extremely severe with regard to the great sins, particularly murder, adultery, and idolatry. Whoever has committed, even once, any of these three crimes, is forever excluded from the Christian community. Are we to infer from this that the churches considered these three sins irremissible? Not at all. Their decision is purely canonical and external. The sinner, though he may no longer hope for a return into the Christian communion, can hope for the remission of his sin. The Church merely refuses to make an outward declaration of this pardon. ²⁹

Was confession public or secret? From a text of Sozomen ³⁰ it would seem that primitively the confession was public, at least in certain churches. If so, this practice was soon suppressed. What is certain is that the confession enjoined at the end of the second and the beginning of the third century by Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and St. Cyprian, was a secret confession. ³¹

Ordinarily the work of satisfaction or the penance must

²⁸ *Ibidem*, 4. Such is the declaration of Tertullian as a Catholic. After he went over to Montanism, he declared certain sins unforgivable.

²⁹ This is what Batiffol seems to prove in his *Études d'histoire et de théologie positive*, first series, pp. 73 ff.

³⁰ Sozomen, *H. E.*, vii, 16.

³¹ St. Cyprian, *De lapsis*, 28; Tertullian, *De baptismo*, 20. On this text, see d'Alès, *La Théologie de Tertullien*, p. 332, note; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, and *The Rich Man's Salvation*, *passim*.

precede the absolution. Often this satisfaction is nothing more than the public confession; at other times it consists of fasts, alms, and prayers. Let us not find fault with the harshness of this discipline: it was what rescued our forefathers from the temptations of a sensual and bloodthirsty paganism, firmly established them in their faith in Christ, and made heroes and martyrs of them.³²

The Liturgy

It is also true that feasts and liturgical prayers of indescribable loveliness gently attached souls to the Church, sus-

³² Renan and, since him, a certain number of Rationalist scholars claim to have found the origin of our Sacraments in the Oriental mysteries, particularly those of the Gnostics. We have had occasion to call attention to the Gospel origins of the Eucharist, of Penance, and of Baptism. The resemblances to be noted between the Christian mysteries and the mysteries of Oriental religions "are due to the fact that they appertain to the essence of all religion, or that they are purely formal and belong to the profane culture of the common environment in which the members of the particular religions are recruited." (Allo, *L'Évangile en face du syncrétisme païen*, p. 68.) "A very little historic sense will suffice to make clear to us that the first churches, being composed of converts from the Synagogue, would tend to model themselves on that pattern; and that the missionary apostles, who had lived for a longer or shorter time in the Christian communities at Jerusalem or Antioch, brought with them customs and traditions already well defined. They had no reason to turn to pagan institutions for a type of organization which they already possessed. And, moreover, the profound horror they felt for paganism told against any imitation of that kind." (Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 37.) We can admit as true that, "when the Church did at length triumph over external obstacles and could come forth into the light of day, she revealed what she was able, by her power of assimilation, to develop without harm to her doctrinal purity. . . . As early as the third century St. Gregory Thaumaturgus understood that many religious habits of the new converts were suited to the promotion of real piety. . . . The anniversary of Christ's birth was celebrated on the day of the *Natalis Invicti*—a fact that is admirably symbolic." (Allo, *op. cit.*, pp. 148 ff.) In the famous inscription of Abercius, a Phrygian bishop of the second century, the symbolism is so like that of Oriental religions that some scholars have denied its Christian origin. See Leclercq, art. "*Abercius*," in the *Dict. d'archéol. chrét.* The origin of Christian worship, the nature of its development, its indebtedness to the Jewish and pagan religions, and the significance of this latter, are treated by Cabrol, art. "*Culte chrétien*," in the *Dict. apol. de la foi cath.* The article contains a very complete bibliography of the subject. See also Brunsmann-Preuss, *Handbook of Fundamental Theology*, Vol. II, St. Louis, 1929, pp. 601-696.

tained in them, along with fear, which is the basis of wisdom, that love which is the height of perfection. The center of all these feasts is the Holy Eucharist.

We have already seen how the liturgy of the Mass was born of the simple account of the Last Supper. The ceremonies of the Mass became in turn the inspiration of all the prayers forming the religious setting of each day, week, and year.

The Divine Master had said: "We ought always to pray, and not to faint." The ideal of the Christian life is a perpetual communion with God by prayer. But the nature and tone of these prayers vary with different hours, circumstances, and commemorations.

Thus it is that each day certain hours are assigned to prayer. In the Acts of the Apostles we see that the Apostles and their disciples met for prayer, preferably at the third hour, or the sixth, or the ninth, that is, at nine o'clock in the morning, at midday, or at three o'clock in the afternoon (terce, sext, and none). Later we shall note that terce is the hour when the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles; sext, the hour of our Lord's crucifixion; none, the hour of His death. Morning and evening are also times naturally indicated for prayer in the practice of all peoples. The Christian day is thus constituted. The canonical office is simply its development and more exact ordering.³³

In the Christian week a place is set apart for the Sunday. How was the substitution of Sunday for the Sabbath brought about? Very naturally and simply, it seems. "The Christian meeting takes place at first on the Sabbath evening, as in the synagogue. There is prayer and preaching. Then comes the 'breaking of bread.' The ceremony ends at dawn on Sunday."³⁴ But this "breaking of bread," the essential act, is performed on Sunday, the day of the Savior's Resurrection,

³³ Cabrol, *Le Livre de la prière antique*, pp. 204-234.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 231.

the Lord's Day. Thenceforth this day becomes a day of special prayer, and, consequently, the day of rest, substituted for the Sabbath. The old Sabbath practice survived a little while longer. Traces of its persistence are found in certain monastic ceremonies mentioned by Cassian and in the celebrated *Peregrinatio Silviae*. Finally Sunday is universally accepted as the great feast-day of the week.

Wednesday and Friday, on the contrary, are days of penance. We find mention of this fact in the earliest books, such as the *Didache*³⁵ and the *Shepherd* of Hermas.³⁶ Friday is the day of the Lord's death and Wednesday that of His betrayal. Ultimately Saturday is considered also as a day of grief and mourning. Such is the origin of the liturgical week. The institution of the Ember days preserves some remains of it.³⁷

At the same time as the liturgical day and week, the liturgical year develops. The first feast to appear is Easter. "By this name, in the beginning, we understand not only the feast of the Savior's Resurrection, but the commemoration of His Passion and death. These three feasts are at first as it were a single feast. They spoke of the Easter of the Passion, the Easter of the crucifixion, and the Easter of the Resurrection."³⁸ The remembrance of the divine sacrifice, which inspired the Christian day, created the Sunday, and sanctified the week, also created the Easter solemnity, the nucleus of the whole liturgical year.

Easter brought in its train the feast of Pentecost, which is the fiftieth day after the Resurrection. These two feasts are mentioned by the earliest ecclesiastical writers. But such a solemnity calls for a preparation by prayer and fasting.

³⁵ *Didache*, VIII, 1.

³⁶ *Similitudes*, v, i.

³⁷ Cabrol, *op. cit.*, pp. 230-234.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 235.

Hence the season of Lent, which, after some fluctuations, becomes established as a period of forty days before Easter. The thought of the Savior's sufferings and death is inseparable from the thought of His Incarnation, which gave Him a nature capable of suffering and dying. The remembrance of His birth into the glorious life also recalls the remembrance of His birth into the earthly life. Thus the feast of Christmas is established.

"Christmas and Easter then become the two poles of the liturgical year. Christmas, like Easter, has its preparation; Advent. The rest of the year is drawn into the orbit of these two feasts."³⁹ All other feasts and Sundays of the year are related either to the Christmas or the Easter cycle. Henceforth every Christian, by simply joining in the liturgical prayers of the Christian community, can "follow the ways" of Jesus, "be united to His virtues and commune in His mysteries," that is, realize the whole of religion, and "that admirable cycle of the Church, which heretofore was, and always ought to be, the joy of the people, the source of light to the learned, and the book of the humblest of the faithful."⁴⁰

The Church of the second century did not celebrate any other feasts universally. But each individual Church piously and festively celebrated the anniversary of the death of its more illustrious martyrs. In 155 the Christians of Smyrna, in their letter relating the martyrdom of St. Polycarp, announce their plan to celebrate the feast of the martyr by a meeting at the very place where his body rests. Toward the end of the century, Tertullian mentions the custom of commemorating the dead by the Eucharistic oblation. These feasts do not become universal in the Church until later.⁴¹

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 238. In this exposition of the liturgy, we have made extensive use of Dom Cabrol's ideas, and at times even of his words.

⁴⁰ Guéranger, *Liturgical Year*, Advent, p. 13.

⁴¹ For a further development of this topic, see Cabrol, *op. cit.*, pp. 290-301, and Delehaye, *Les Origines du culte des martyrs*.

The Easter Controversy

The liturgical work, slowly elaborated in the second century, was to become, by its development, one of the most solid foundations and most conspicuous signs of the unity of the Church. It may be in the design of Providence that the greatest blessings are to be won at the price of the greatest trials. About the end of the second century, the fixing of the date of Easter, the center of the whole liturgy, occasioned one of the most painful conflicts that have afflicted the Church.

By common accord, all the churches of the East and West had acclaimed the feast of Easter as the great solemnity of the Christian year. But they differed as to the date of its celebration, and the settling of that date did not proceed without difficulty. It was generally agreed that the Savior ate the Pasch on the fourteenth day of the Jewish month Nisan, corresponding to the fourteenth day of the March moon. The Christians of Asia stuck to that date, and on that day merely substituted the Eucharistic supper for the Jewish ritualistic repast. Moreover, they celebrated their feast of Easter on whatever day of the week fell on that date. Thus, they said, it was that the Apostles John and Philip and, since them, all the Churches of Asia, had celebrated the great feast. The Christians of the West made a different calculation. In their opinion the purpose of the great Christian feast was the commemoration of Christ's Resurrection. But Christ rose from the dead on Sunday. Was it not precisely to celebrate this mystery that the Sunday of every week became a holyday? To them it seemed that the annual commemorative feast should be celebrated only on a Sunday. They fixed upon the Sunday following the 14th Nisan. Their feast did not always correspond with the date on which Christ came forth from the tomb, but at least it corresponded with the day of the week when that mystery was accomplished. The Sunday kept its solemnity,

and thereby the separation of Christianity from Judaism was accentuated. The Westerners appealed to the tradition of SS. Peter and Paul as against the tradition of SS. John and Philip. They blamed the Easterners—the “Quartodecimans,” as they were called—for seeming to follow the Old Law, for giving their feast a Jewish color. At the bottom of this simple question of a date lay the old opposition between the Judaizing spirit and the Catholic spirit.

While Anicetus was pope, Polycarp, the venerable bishop of Smyrna, had vainly tried to have the Quartodeciman practice accepted in the whole Church. The Roman pontiff, in turn, was unable to induce the aged bishop to adopt the Roman practice. These two representatives of the Church conferred together on the question, but without result. Yet concord was not at all broken. The diversity of practice caused merely an uneasiness in the Church. One community would be in Lenten mourning while another would be chanting the alleluia of the Resurrection. The contrast was the more offensive when there might be seen in the same city, namely, at Rome, Asiatics remaining faithful to their customs and celebrating Easter in the midst of the Christians, on the same day as the Jews. Under Pope Soter the relations between Westerners and Easterners were particularly strained. Some disturbances, about which we are not clearly informed, took place over this matter at Laodicea in Phrygia. Men gave way to passion. About 191 Pope Victor decided to intervene. He requested the Bishop of Ephesus, Polycrates, to assemble the bishops of Asia at Ephesus and urge them to conform to the Roman practice. Polycrates did assemble the bishops, but, in their name as in his own, he replied to the Pope that neither he nor his brother bishops could abandon an Apostolic tradition.⁴² Was not the Apostolic tradition the supreme rule, the final

⁴² On the councils concerning the feast of Easter, see Hefele, *Councils*, 1, 80 ff.

“canon of the faith”? Those on the other side appealed to an identical motive.

The conflict between the two Apostolic traditions would have remained unsettled, or would have issued in schism, had not one supreme authority, interpretative of the tradition, been universally recognized. Pope Victor, the titular of that supreme authority, judged the moment had come to exercise it toward the whole Church. By virtue of the power that he held from Jesus Christ through the Apostle Peter, Pope Victor gave orders to all the bishops of Christendom to celebrate the feast of Easter on Sunday. From all points of the Christian world, from Jerusalem as from Alexandria, from the churches of Pontus as from those of Gaul, assurance of adherence came to the Roman pontiff.⁴³ Only the province of Asia continued to resist. Victor considered he might now go to the very limit of his powers. He wrote to all the churches that the insubordinate brethren without exception would be separated from the Catholic communion.

Not a voice was raised in the Church to claim that the Bishop of Rome was exceeding his rights, was arrogating a new power; but a venerable voice was heard, respectful and peacemaking. It was that of the aged Bishop of Lyons. Irenaeus, providentially brought to the West, had unhesitatingly accepted the Western custom for his church, but he was pained to see the old churches of Asia, where he had passed his youth, and the grand Church of Ephesus, whose traditions he used to invoke against the heretics, on the point of being separated from the body of the universal Church. He wrote to the Bishop of Rome a letter which is partly preserved by Eusebius. In substance, Irenaeus reminds Pope Victor that failure to observe Easter on Sunday did not seem to him to be one of those matters for which anyone should be

⁴³ Eusebius, *H. E.*, V, xxv.

expelled from the Church, and recalled the conference between the holy bishop Polycarp, disciple of St. John, with Victor's predecessor, Anicetus. "They communicated with each other," he says, "and they parted from each other in peace, for the peace of the whole Church was kept both by those who observed and by those who did not."⁴⁴

As St. Peter gave in to the just remonstrance of St. Paul, so the Roman Pontiff gave in to the advice of "Irenaeus, writing in the name of the Christians whose leader he was in Gaul."⁴⁵ The excommunication of the churches of Asia had no further consequences. And Eusebius says that thus Irenaeus justified his name, which means "peace," for he brought peace to the dispute.⁴⁶ Little by little the Churches of Asia adopted the Roman usage, which the Council of Nicaea had only to consecrate.

Church Property

As the authority of the Church grew strong in all grades of the hierarchy, she increased her works of charity, teaching, and apostolate.

From the beginning, the Church had her treasury of charity. Firstfruits, tithes, and free-will offerings of the faithful had been its first sources.

The *Didache*,⁴⁷ the *Didascalia*,⁴⁸ the *Apostolic Constitutions*,⁴⁹ and the *Canons of Hippolytus*⁵⁰ mention the custom

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, V, xxiv, 17.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 11.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 18. St. Irenaeus, in his letter, does not deny to St. Victor the universal Church's right of excommunication. Duchesne, after relating these facts, says: "What terms are we to make use of if we are forbidden to apply the title of 'Head of the Church' to one who is the depository of such plenary authority?" (*The Churches Separated from Rome*, p. 96.)

⁴⁷ *Didache*, XIII, 3-7; Funk, *Patres apostolici*, I, 32.

⁴⁸ *Didascalia*, 8, 9.

⁴⁹ *Apostolic Constitutions*, II, 25, 34, 35.

⁵⁰ *Canons* 186-194; in Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, p. 524.

of bringing the firstfruits of the harvest to the church and placing them in the hands of the bishop. The *Leonine Sacramentary* gives us the form of blessing then pronounced by the bishop over the offerings.⁵¹ The *Didascalia*⁵² and the *Apostolic Constitutions* speak also of the tithe. This contribution, which later was made obligatory, was regarded as a voluntary offering and was not general in the third century. The free-will gifts of the rich into the hands of the bishop, for him to use in the service of the poor, seem, on the contrary, to have been very abundant at the beginning of the third century. Tertullian speaks of this when he says: "The family possessions, which generally destroy brotherhood among you, create fraternal bonds among us. One in mind and soul, we do not hesitate to share our earthly goods with one another. All things are common among us but our wives. We give up our community where it is practiced alone by others."⁵³ St. Cyprian tells us that the churches had boxes for the people's offerings.⁵⁴ Yet the Church seems to have possessed no landed property during the first two centuries. It is only at the beginning of the third century, or at the earliest towards the end of the second, that we can say the Church began to own landed property.

Throughout the Empire at that period there was a great development of burial associations. In the late years of the second century,⁵⁵ Septimius Severus by rescript permitted, under certain conditions, the formation of societies that could possess cemeteries. There is reason to think that this rescript, probably issued in reply to some governor alarmed by the number of unauthorized associations, sanctioned rather than

⁵¹ Cited in Duchesne, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

⁵² *Didascalia*, 9.

⁵³ Tertullian, *Apology*, 39.

⁵⁴ *De opere et eleemosyna*.

⁵⁵ De Rossi, *Bullett. di archeol. crist.*, 1866; p. 11.

created this general movement.⁵⁶ The Christians cherished a great veneration for the dead. In the burial of their deceased brethren they used aromatics such as the pagans offered to their gods. "The Christians' only luxury," says Tertullian, "is in death."⁵⁷ The Church at once took advantage of the facilities offered by the Emperor's rescript.⁵⁸ Some cemeteries became the property of burial associations made up entirely of Christians.⁵⁹ It is even likely that the Christians took their already founded institutions for the support of the clergy or assistance of the poor and incorporated them as mutual benefit societies.⁶⁰

The *Philosophumena*, published about 230, says that the administration of the cemeteries belonged to the bishop.⁶¹ Thomassin proves in a general way that the bishop at that time had supreme authority in the administration of Church property and revenue, which were possessed by communities. In the performance of this onerous duty he was assisted by the priests and deacons of his church. These latter gave an accounting to the bishop, but the bishop had to give an accounting only to God.⁶²

The property and income of the church formed a common aggregate administered by the bishop, who was alone at the

⁵⁶ Allard, *Histoire des pers.*, II, 10.

⁵⁷ *Apol.*, 42.

⁵⁸ Until then the Christians had been buried in private properties, as also they had held their meetings in private houses.

⁵⁹ We do not say "the property of the Church." Before Constantine the Church never had a legal existence at Rome, even as a group of small burial associations. And the law did not allow anyone to belong to more than one association. (Justinian, *Digest*, XLVII, xxii, 1.) But the State, even while ignoring the Church, could recognize private associations having a specifically determined purpose.

⁶⁰ The words of Tertullian (*Apol.*, 39), "*Coimus ad Deum . . . arcae genus est . . . modicam unusquisque stipem menstrua die . . . apponit*," may be compared with the following texts of Gaius (*Digest*, III, iv, 1): "*Permissum est habere arcam communem*," and of Marcian (*Digest*, XLVII, xxii, 1): "*Permittitur stipem menstruam conferre . . . Semel in mense coeant*."

⁶¹ *Philosophumena*, bk. IX, chap. 12.

⁶² Thomassin, *Ancienne et nouvelle discipline*, Part 3, II, 5.

head of that administration. And the bishop must use these possessions, in the name of the community, for holy purposes that correspond to three needs. He must maintain our Lord in His own person, present in the midst of His people, by public worship; in the person of His ministers, according to these words, "He that receiveth you, receiveth Me"; and in the person of the poor, according to these other words, "As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me."

During the first two centuries, public worship was extremely simple. The ministers lived from the common funds, as did the poor.⁶³ Many had given up their patrimony to live solely by the altar. Those who did not make this renunciation were by that very fact considered to have renounced their share in the ecclesiastical distributions; and well-to-do clerics were charged with the support of the poor. Others, following St. Paul's example, supported themselves by the labor of their hands. In a word, the ecclesiastical patrimony was merged with that of the poor.

This religious regard for poverty is very impressive in the first centuries of the Church. The *Shepherd* of Hermas says that, as the young elm, which appears barren, shares in the fruitfulness of the vine, so the poor man bears the fruit of prayer that belongs to him and to the rich who support him; their good works are their common patrimony before God.⁶⁴

It could not occur to the mind of any Christian to deny the right of private property. In many passages of Scripture, especially in the Decalogue, stealing is regarded as a sin. But what a contrast between the concept which Christians then had about the riches of this world, and the pagan idea! "In every city the rich and the poor were two enemies living by the side of each other, the one coveting wealth, and the other seeing their

⁶³ *Didache*, 13; Funk, *Patres apostolici*, I, 30-32.

⁶⁴ *Similitudes*, 2.

wealth coveted. No relation, no service, no labor united them. The poor could acquire wealth only by despoiling the rich. The rich could defend their property only by extreme skill or by force. They regarded each other with the eyes of hate.”⁶⁵

The Poor

Widows, orphans, the aged, the infirm—all these were the privileged objects of Christian charity. Tertullian tells us how the rich woman, with the hours of her day marked out, goes from door to door in lodgings of the poor, bringing comfort to her suffering brethren.⁶⁶

For the Christian of that time, as for the inspired authors of the Psalms, by the poor is meant anyone who is weak and liable to be oppressed: the stranger, the slave, women, children. In the eyes of the pagans, a foreigner is an enemy, a barbarian; but the Christian recognizes a bond other than citizenship. As we read in the *Epistle to Diognetus*, “every foreign country is their fatherland, and every fatherland is a foreign country. . . . They have their citizenship in heaven.”⁶⁷ This feeling was shown especially in the way the followers of Christ exercised hospitality. “A stranger arrives in the evening at the house of a Christian family. He is poor and unknown. From beneath his cloak he takes out an old papyrus marked with the seal of another poor man, whom the Christians call the bishop of such or such a city. Sometimes the stranger brings nothing, for letters and seals have been counterfeited by the heretics. A sign agreed upon identifies him. The family is awakened. The stranger’s dusty feet are bathed. This is what St. Paul calls ‘washing the feet of the saints.’ He is asked to pray with the family and in the name of the fam-

⁶⁵ Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City*, p. 454.

⁶⁶ *To his wife*, 2; *De cultu feminarum*, 2.

⁶⁷ *Letter to Diognetus*, 5.

ily. If he is a bishop, he is asked to preach in the little domestic church. And the pagans who, on their way home from their revelries, pass this house and see a poor man entering among these other poor people, scarcely suspect this is a pastoral visit by a bishop from some distant place to this church, where even his name is unknown.”⁶⁸

In pagan antiquity a slave was without rights, without family, without fatherland; he was even without God.⁶⁹ Claudius, Nero, Domitian, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius made laws tending to improve the lot of the slaves. But nearly all these laws were at once abrogated by nullification; nearly all are to the same purpose and repeat the same provisions.⁷⁰

The pagan world did not find the secret of giving the slave the soul of a free man or of inspiring the master with a feeling of genuine and effective brotherhood toward his servant. The Christian Church, on the contrary, preaching the universal redemption by Christ and teaching all her children the lessons of obedience and lowliness of heart, as also respect for the dignity of man, was able safely to repeat at its meetings the words of St. Paul, “In one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free.”⁷¹ . . . You are bought with a price; be not made the bondslaves of men.”⁷² When Christian slaves, as Mary,⁷³ Evelpistus,⁷⁴ and Blandina,⁷⁵ courageously shed their blood for Christ, the

⁶⁸ Champagny, *La Charité chrétienne dans les premiers siècles de l'Eglise*, p. 82.

⁶⁹ “*Quibus extera sacra aut nulla*,” says Cassius, in the *Digest*. Ulpian speaks of “the slave or any other animal”; Gaius: “Slaves, beasts, and other things”; Paulus: “A slave’s head has no rights.” At the customs, the same tax was paid for slaves as for horses and mules.

⁷⁰ See Allard, *Esclaves, serfs et mainmortables*, pp. 61-65.

⁷¹ 1 Cor. 12: 13.

⁷² *Ibidem*, 7: 23.

⁷³ See *supra*, p. 213.

⁷⁴ See *supra*, p. 237.

⁷⁵ See *supra*, p. 242.

Church rejoiced in honoring them in a special way.⁷⁶ A contemporary of Hadrian, called Hermas, who was converted by St. Alexander, in no way imperiled public order when, on a certain Easter, he freed 1,250 slaves at one time. They were all Christians, therefore all prepared for freedom.

Gradually Christian customs influenced pagan society. "The progress started out from the Church, passed by way of philosophy, reached the domain of law, which received it without perhaps suspecting its Christian origin."⁷⁷ Those judges who had heard the sublime answers of Christians such as Evelpistus or Blandina, those crowds that had seen them die, could not remain wholly unmoved by such sights. Ideas of justice, human brotherhood, and the equality of souls in God's sight, rose from the dungeons and amphitheaters even to the palaces of the Palatine. It came to pass that a slave was recognized to have some sort of civil right; a milder jurisprudence than the strict law came into being. Between the slave and his fields there was admitted a sort of undefined union and affinity. In the sale of slaves, the son was no longer separated from his father, quite as if the slave was a member of a family.⁷⁸

Women and children were also given greater freedom. Their threefold servitude was born of the same principle; their threefold freedom advanced abreast.⁷⁹ Claudius had freed

⁷⁶ The tomb of the slave Ampliatius, discovered in the nineteenth century, is more magnificent than are most of those of underground Rome. (See Allard, "*Le Tombeau d'un esclave chrétien*," in *Lettres chrétiennes*, March-April, 1882.)

⁷⁷ Champagny, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

⁷⁸ Allard, *Les Esclaves chrétiens*.

⁷⁹ Troplong, *Influence du christianisme sur le droit civil des Romains*, p. 316. On Christianity's influence in the first centuries, see Calippe, *Saint Paul et la cité chrétienne*; Baudrillart, *La Charité aux premiers siècles du christianisme*; Badet, *La Femme chrétienne au temps des persécutions*; d'Azambuja, *Ce que le christianisme a fait pour la femme*; Maxime Sabatier, *L'Eglise et le travail manuel*; Lallemand, *Histoire de la charité*, vol. II; Kurth, *Les Origines de la civilisation moderne*, vol. I; Balms, *Protestantism and Catholicity Compared in their Effects on the Civilization of Europe*.

woman from the necessity of permanent tutelage. The sons, who, like the slaves, had been excluded from any property rights, were granted them in the time of Nerva and Trajan. The murder or starvation of new-born children, and their abandonment or their sale to strangers were punished by Antoninus Pius, at least in the case of the rich. Among the poor, these practices were tolerated. What could a poor man, they said, do with his children?

Influence of the Church upon the Old Régime

During the first two centuries the Church could hardly affect the world except by her moral influence. That influence was considerable. But the old régime had in itself the germs of its own dissolution. Its three foundations—religion, the family, and property—were undermined at their base. The Roman religion was sapped by philosophical skepticism. It was in vain that Stoicism tried to restore it. The Stoic's whole contribution was a moral attitude, not a doctrine. The old régime of the family had disappeared, not by reform, but by corruption. The economic régime, based on the exploitation of vanquished peoples and on slavery, exhausted the world and was headed for a catastrophe.⁸⁰ Christianity appeared with a complete programme of social restoration,⁸¹ capable of raising up the ancient world, if it would accept its inspiration, and capable of replacing it if it should decide to reject it. Under the shelter of a pure and holy religion, the Church, by the restoration of the family, could furnish the old régime with respect for woman and for the child, the indispensable foundations of every organized society. By raising up the

⁸⁰ Chevalier and Legendre, *Le Catholicisme et la société*, Paris, 1907, p. 16.

⁸¹ See Garriguet, *Valeur sociale de l'Evangile*; Lugan, *L'Enseignement social de Jésus*; Calippe, *Saint Paul et la cité chrétienne*. See also the first pastoral letter of Cardinal Pecci (later Leo XIII) on the Church and Civilization, his Encyclical "*Immortale Dei*," and his letter to Cardinal Lavigerie (October 27, 1888) on the Abolition of Slavery.

soul of the slave and by sanctifying labor, this would have transformed the economic order. Even the political régime might have been restored. By its doctrine of the separation of the powers, by teaching the duty of rendering to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's, the Christian religion would have destroyed imperial despotism in its more atrocious aspects. By the diffusion of its spirit of charity, it would have calmed the inevitable conflicts and, so far as this world allows, would have established a reign of concord and peace.

But the old régime would not accept this Christian restoration. Therefore, it fell under the blows of the barbarians, while the Church resumed her work amid the victorious races.

The Church and the Intellectual Movement

The Church had also a plan of intellectual renovation. Her very doctrine, which St. Irenaeus summed up and Tertullian defended, was a programme, the most extensive and pregnant that was ever presented to the human mind. A writer of our day, one who did not accept our faith, has stated this with fine loftiness of thought:

"On the one hand, it [the preaching of Christianity] was so simple that it could be summed up in a few brief sentences and understood in a single crisis of the inner life; on the other hand, it was so versatile and rich that it vivified all thought and stimulated every emotion. It was capable, almost from the outset, of vieing with every noble and worthy enterprise, with any speculation, or with any cult of the mysteries. Clear and transparent, it was also profound and full of mystery. It was a doctrine, and yet no doctrine, a philosophy and yet something different from philosophy."⁸²

The city of Alexandria, that center of scientific speculations, was the very place to become the home of the Christian intellectual movement. Teachers, recruited from everywhere, be-

⁸² Harnack, *Expansion of Christianity*, I, 102.

fore audiences that were cosmopolitan, but always eager to learn, there discussed the most varied theories, taken from Jewish and pagan sources. There it was that Gnosis shone the brightest. And there a fearless Christian resolved to found a great school of religious philosophy, or rather to reorganize on a vaster scale the "Didascalia" which Eusebius speaks of as belonging to the earliest times of Christianity.⁸³

This man, whom his disciple Clement of Alexandria calls "the first in power of all the holy and truly remarkable men that were his teachers,"⁸⁴ was called Pantaenus. The Church honors him with the title of saint. He was a native of Sicily.⁸⁵ Before becoming a Christian he had been a follower of Stoic teaching.⁸⁶ He was led to the Christian faith by converse with some disciples of the Apostles, perhaps with St. Polycarp, whom he knew in the East, according to Tillemont's conjecture.⁸⁷ With great earnestness he set about the study of the Scriptures.⁸⁸ His reputation as an exegete, philosopher, and theologian spread far and wide, reaching even "India," that is, probably southern Arabia, where the people had frequent dealings with Alexandria. The inhabitants of that country, delighted by what they heard of the famous Christian philosopher, expressed a desire to hear the gospel from his lips. Pantaenus, with the sanction of his bishop, Demetrius,⁸⁹ went to them and, it is said, found there St. Matthew's Gospel in Hebrew.⁹⁰ On returning to Alexandria, he continued his teaching until 212, according to St. Jerome⁹¹—202, according to others. Before his death he had the joy of seeing the first writ-

⁸³ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, iii.

⁸⁴ *Stromata*, I, 1.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ St. Jerome, *Catal.*, 36; Eusebius, V, x.

⁸⁷ Tillemont, *Mémoires*, III, 288.

⁸⁸ Photius, *Codex*, 118; Tillemont, *loc. cit.*

⁸⁹ Tillemont, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

⁹⁰ St. Jerome, Letter 70, *Ad Magnum*.

⁹¹ St. Jerome, *De viris illustribus*, 36.

ings of his disciple Clement of Alexandria and those of Origen, a young disciple of the latter. St. Pantaenus was a priest. His influence was exercised especially by his oral teaching; but he also composed several Scripture commentaries, of which a few fragments remain.⁹²

Later the Christian school of Alexandria took on a sort of official character under the direction of the bishop. But in Pantaenus' time its organization was rudimentary. It had no definite premises. The pupils met at any hour of the day at the professor's house. But, to use the words of Clement of Alexandria, when the venerable Pantaenus, "the true, the Sicilian bee, gathering the spoil of the flowers of the prophetic and Apostolic meadow, engendered in the souls of his hearers a deathless element of knowledge,"⁹³ their enthusiasm heralded the glorious light which this school would one day cast upon the Christian world.

The Spread of Christianity

This Christian world was marvelously enlarged during the persecutions of the second century. From statistics based on authentic documents we know that Christianity then had organized communities in all the provinces and that, thanks to the churches of Mesopotamia, it had even passed beyond the bounds of the Empire.⁹⁴ Tertullian could boast: "We are but of yesterday, and we have filled every place among you—cities, islands, fortresses, towns, market-places, the very camp, tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum—we have left nothing to you but the temples of your gods."⁹⁵

The penetration of Christianity into all classes of society was accentuated during the whole course of the second cen-

⁹² Tillemont, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

⁹³ Clement, *Stromata*, I, i.

⁹⁴ Harnack, *Expansion of Christianity*, II, 324 ff.

⁹⁵ *Apol.*, chap. 37.

tury.⁹⁶ The military career was abhorrent to some, either because it seemed opposed to evangelical meekness, or especially because the soldiers were perpetually in danger of apostasy. Rigorists, like Tertullian, even taught that the profession of arms was utterly incompatible with Christianity.⁹⁷ But the Church was more tolerant and never hindered Christians from entering the army.⁹⁸ The number of soldier-martyrs is considerable, precisely because acts of idolatry were often required of them. But many times the Christian soldiers, by their deep sense of duty and discipline, were recognized to be the best defenders of the Empire.

Under Marcus Aurelius, during the German campaign, they saved the army, the Emperor, and perhaps the Empire. Marcus Aurelius was in a fortified camp in the country of the Quadi, that is, northwest of what we now call Hungary, surrounded by barbarians. "It was the middle of the summer. Water was lacking. The Roman soldiers, parched with thirst, were incapable of fighting. The gods were implored. Marcus Aurelius prayed, howsoever his philosophy permitted him to pray, and he had incantations made by the magicians, the inevitable camp-followers of the armies. The twelfth legion, called the *legio fulminata*, recruited in the Christian district of Melitene in Cappadocia, was entirely Christian. Its soldiers met together outside the camp, where they knelt down and prayed to the true God, as the Christians prayed. These six thousand men praying, with their arms outstretched, presented so strange a sight that the barbarians stopped in surprise."⁹⁹ Presently they resumed the fight and rain began to fall abundantly upon the army. The Roman soldiers held out their helmets and shields to catch the water and repelled the

⁹⁶ See Rivière, *La Propagation du christianisme dans les trois premiers siècles*, chap. 2.

⁹⁷ *De corona militis*, 1.

⁹⁸ See Allard, *Ten Lectures on the Martyrs*, pp. 169 f.

⁹⁹ Champagny, *Les Antonins*, III, 115.

enemy while quenching their thirst. Of a sudden there was lightning, and the hail fell so hard upon the barbarian army that its soldiers scattered in panic. The Roman army was saved.

When a monument commemorating Marcus Aurelius' victories in Germany was erected later on the Campus Martius, the prodigy was attributed to Jupiter Pluvius. But besides the official testimony, the memory of the event as it occurred spread among the people, inspiring the pagans with a religious veneration for the God of the Christians and also strengthening the faith of the Christians themselves.

Montanism

At the beginning of the third century Christianity was enjoying a broad tolerance, its influence was growing, it was continuing to expand, its works of zeal and charity were increasing among the poor, and it was displaying a scientific élan among its intellectual élite. Therefore it seemed that now the Church could give free rein to her most magnificent hopes. But in the designs of Providence doubtless the periods of peace and prosperity, which God grants His faithful, are only truces, during which they must fortify themselves for new strifes. While the events we have been relating were taking place, a sect, which came into being obscurely in a village of Phrygian Mysia, was growing; it was to ravage the Church and turn her most eloquent apologist against her. Many doctors of the school of Alexandria were to trouble the faithful by doctrinal recklessness. The very expansion of Christianity would soon invite a terrible persecution. In the next chapter we shall have occasion to recount these new trials. At present we will only relate the birth and progress of the Montanist heresy.

Phrygia was the country of Corybants and orgiastic rites.

Of all the regions of antiquity, it was the most given to religious chimeras. St. Justin refers to the foolish simplicity with which the Phrygians accepted every odd novelty.¹⁰⁰ A certain Montanus, a neophyte, a former priest of Cybele, exploited this tendency by cleverly giving a Christian coloring to all the extravagances of his haughty and perverse mind.¹⁰¹ For the regular authority of the hierarchical pastors he substituted personal inspiration and ecstasy. This was, he said, returning to the charisms of Apostolic times; it was putting oneself into direct contact with God without the intermediary of men. On the basis of these two reasons he presented his conception as a Christianity more perfect than that of the traditional Church. Many believed him and joined him. Ordinary Christians glorified martyrdom; Montanus commanded that it be sought. "Shame," he said, "upon the Christian who dies in his bed." Some of his followers might be seen rashly inviting torture, reserving a cowardly yielding when the torture actually began, as did the Phrygian Quintus, who is mentioned in the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp. He had led several companions to martyrdom, but at the sight of the beasts, they became frightened and apostatized.¹⁰² The Christians praised chastity; Montanus condemned marriage. The Christians, on the authority of St. John, relied on the Paraclete; Montanus claimed to be, if not the Paraclete, at least His authentic mouthpiece.¹⁰³ He read the Prophets and the Apoca-

¹⁰⁰ *Dialogue*, 119.

¹⁰¹ According to St. Epiphanius, the rise of this sect dates from the year 157. (*Haereses*, xli, 1; cf. Harnack, *Chronologie*, p. 372.)

¹⁰² *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 4. Eusebius speaks of a Montanist, Alcibiades, who, being in prison along with other confessors of the faith, at first took no food but bread and water, according to the rigor of the sect, but soon afterwards thankfully used the gifts of the Creator. (Eusebius, *H. E.*, V, iii.)

¹⁰³ On the identification of Montanus with the Holy Ghost, see a curious inscription published by Clermont-Ganneau, in the *Bulletin archéologique du comité du travail historique et scientifique*, 1901, p. 310. The inscription reads as follows: "*Flavius Abus, domesticus, i[n] nomine Patris et Filii [et ?] Do[mi]ni*"

lypse, but he also read the Book of Henoch, which contained many precise details about the last days of the world. This book gives us an idyllic description of the earth which God will adorn on the last day for His elect, where God will give the just all the joys of the spirit and of the senses, an unmixed happiness and a boundless fecundity. The followers of the new doctrine declared that Montanus had more things revealed to him than Christ.¹⁰⁴ He certainly preached more of them. Montanus' plan was very simple: to outbid the Church by exaggerating her dogmas and precepts. In course of time this became the tactics of many heresiarchs.

Unfortunately such an attitude was easier to hold than to put into action. Renan says: "It seems that private inspiration, in the case of Montanus as in most cases, was accompanied by license and audacity."¹⁰⁵ Two women, Priscilla and Maximilla, joined the new Paraclete, like him prophesying and like him falling into ecstasies, assuming the exercise of ecclesiastical functions and stirring up the whole region. Some were blinded by their enthusiasm, but "doubts were also expressed as to the virginity of Priscilla, who, like her companion Maximilla, had, it was said, left her husband to follow Montanus."¹⁰⁶ It was discovered that Themison, a supposed confessor of the faith, who was greatly honored in the sect, had bought his freedom. Another, Alexander, was even less worthy; he had been summoned before the tribunal, not however as a Christian, but as a robber.¹⁰⁷

How did such extravagances succeed in seducing anybody besides the simple Phrygian country folk? Montanus was clever, it was said; several of his disciples outdid him in clever-

Muntani, quod promisit complevit." On some recently discovered inscriptions, see the *Echos d'Orient*, V, 148; VI, 61; VII, 53.

¹⁰⁴ Tertullian, *De praescr.*, 52.

¹⁰⁵ *Marc-Aurèle*, p. 216.

¹⁰⁶ Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 200.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

ness. They showed astounding ability in adapting their theories to their audiences, completely changing them when need required. The doctrine of private interpretation has rarely been a model of consistency. Montanism, when it spread in Africa, had to be transformed and softened. It no longer took a stand hostile to the Great Church, but assumed an air of piety, edification, and uncompromising austerity.¹⁰⁸ In this way the sect caught in its snare the genial, though harsh and fiery, author of *Apologeticus* and *De praescriptione*.

¹⁰⁸ D'Alès, *La Théologie de Tertullien*, pp. 441 ff. See Labriolle, *La Crise montaniste*, and *Les Sources de l'histoire montaniste*.

CHAPTER IV

From the Persecution of Septimius Severus to that of Decius (202-259)

IN general the first half of the third century was comparatively tranquil for the Christians. Aside from the persecution of Septimius Severus, which continued for nine years, and of Maximinus, which lasted three years, the emperors for various reasons did not attack the Church. But in the case of those two persecutions, the nature of the decrees which started them and the severity with which those decrees were carried out, made them particularly terrible.

And this period was especially productive of great men. It was the time when Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, St. Hippolytus, and St. Cyprian, in the full maturity of their talent, published their masterpieces. No other age can boast of producing a more powerful writer than Tertullian, a more catholic genius than Origen, a more prolific scholar than Hippolytus, and a more congenial man of action than St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage. But in the early years of the century Tertullian went over to heresy, and it is unknown whether he ever returned to the true faith. Origen was alarming in his daring. St. Hippolytus was in conflict with Pope St. Callistus. St. Cyprian, a too docile disciple of Tertullian, held a doctrine about Baptism that placed him in opposition to the Church of Rome.

The loftiest problems were appealing to the consideration of men's minds. Never was the mystery of the divine life examined with more earnestness. But in the confused mixture of opinions, such rash hypotheses have a foreboding of heresy,

and certain independent attitudes have an appearance of schism.

The admiration aroused by the history of this half-century is tinged with anxiety. The development of ideas did, it is true, prepare the way for the great definitions of the next century; but it was also a prelude to the great heresies that were to disturb that period.

First Years of the Reign of Septimius Severus

The era of religious peace, begun in the reign of Commodus continued under the very short government of Pertinax and for some years longer under Septimius Severus. There was no hint that this ruler would start another persecution. He seemed not to have any philosophical persuasions, such as led Marcus Aurelius to regard the Christians as rivals. Nor did he have that exclusive devotion to the national religion which Trajan considered the very safety of the Empire, nor the whimsical ferocity of Nero, who might at any moment be expected to take the most sanguinary measures. Septimius Severus had been in turn orator, lawyer, something of a physician, magistrate, and general. He was an upstart with no passion except commonplace ambition. No fanaticism stirred him. In fact, so far as religion is concerned, he was curious rather than anxious. When traveling in the East, he adored Serapis and made a collection of whatever books he found in the sanctuaries. When he was governor of the province of Lyons, he had no hesitation in providing a Christian nurse for his eldest son Bassianus, nicknamed Caracalla in history.¹ In a certain illness he was cured through the care and perhaps the prayers of a Christian slave, Proculus Toparcion, whom he had attached to his person and lodged in his palace.² That a number of Christians were in his suite is evidenced by

¹ Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, 3.

² *Ibid.*

certain inscriptions and various archæological indications.³

But the good will of Septimius Severus, based neither upon any deep conviction nor upon a permanent political interest, was not to be counted on. It was no guarantee against the Emperor's personal whims. It permitted popular calumnies to run on, and was at the mercy of any court influence.

Through the influence of Christian apologists, the upper classes of society lost their prejudices against Christian practices. But horrible reports continued to circulate among the common people. "None are more noisy clamorers for the punishment of the Christians than the mob. The other classes no doubt are, in proportion to their authority, sincere in their pious reverence; no hostile spirit is breathed from the senate itself, from the knighthood, from the camp, from the very palace." ⁴ "The outcry is that the State is filled with Christians—that they are in the fields, in the citadels, in the islands." ⁵ "The income of the temples is falling off," the priests of the idols lamented; "no one any longer drops an obolus into the sacred offering box." The people of Carthage were crying out like the people of Rome: "To the lions with the Christians!" And they demanded the spoliation of the Christians' property and the dissolution of the burial corporations, saying: "No burial-grounds for the Christians!" ⁶

The Christians at court were living so worthily as to win everyone's respect, yet the modest and firm reservation which they kept in their homage to the emperor,⁷ could not entirely hide their convictions regarding the almost idolatrous character of the honors paid the Caesars.⁸ Hence they were regarded

³ De Rossi, *Bullett. di archeol. crist.*, 1863, p. 83; Boissier, *Rome and Pompeii*; *Archæological Rambles*, p. 129.

⁴ Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, 35.

⁵ *Ibidem*, 1.

⁶ "*Areæ non sint!*" (Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, 3.)

⁷ "*Casti et sobrii et probi.*" (Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, 35.)

⁸ Tertullian, *On Idolatry*, 15; *To his Wife*, II, 6.

with a menacing ill-will, which at times became malice. The famous caricature of Alexamenos adoring a crucifix with an ass's head, discovered in 1856 in an apartment on the Palatine, and nearby the inscription *Libanius episcopus*, seem to be a malicious jest by some pagan serving boys against the Christian serving boys of the household of Septimius Severus.⁹ The men of letters, who were numerous at the court and who had come from all parts of the Empire, appear to have often indulged in like pleasantries. A certain woman supplied a common bond to this vague spite, by creating a rallying point for all the religions represented at court. It was the Empress herself.

The Empress Julia Domna

Before becoming emperor, Septimius Severus had married the daughter of a high priest of the temple of El-Gabal at Emesa. Her name was Julia Domna. "She was a woman of strong will, and of remarkable intelligence and cultivation. As empress, she was soon surrounded by all that was most intellectual in the Empire. At that time, cultivated men had ceased to ridicule the gods. They were becoming religious. . . . A woman of such practical ability that, if allowed, she would have ruled the State, could not ignore the religious position, and she interested her circle in it also. In spite of edicts old and new, the progress of Christianity was becoming daily more alarming. The old religions could only bring against it a divided force. Might they not be drawn together round some tenet or symbol, and thus acquire a kind of unity? . . . The

⁹ This is the view of De Rossi. The drawing may be seen in Marucchi, *Eléments d'archéologie chrétienne*, I, 39. The original caricature is preserved in the Kircher Museum at Rome. It represents a man with an ass's head stretched upon a cross, and beside him another man at prayer, and the following inscription: "Alexamenos adores his god." Haupt's hypothesis is that the drawing was not an anti-Christian caricature, but an allusion to the worship of Trypho. This view, however, is not accepted by scholars generally.

Empress had, however, too much good sense to pose as inspired. She left that rôle to a rather mysterious personage, Apollonius of Tyana, who was known to have lived in the time of the Caesars and the Flavians. His reputation as Pythagorean ascetic, miracle-worker, wandering preacher, and sorcerer, still lingered in Asia Minor and elsewhere. One of the Empress' literary circle, Philostratus, was set to write his life. Julia Domna had in her possession some rather doubtful memoirs by a certain Damius, said to have been a companion of Apollonius. These she gave to Philostratus, and on this foundation he embroidered extensively, borrowing right and left, even from the Christian Gospels, the traits best calculated to bring out the importance and virtues of his hero: such as his love for his fellow-creatures, his great compassion for human misery, and his deep religious devotion to the gods in general, and the divine Sun in particular. The book had a great success. In surroundings hostile to Christianity, it was soon seen what capital could be made of it, if not in favor of pagan syncretism, at least against the spread of Christianity."¹⁰

It should be noted that the persecution of the Christians had never been officially discontinued. It was neglected, not abrogated. If popular denunciations should be made against the Christians, the magistrates might consider they had a right to act. Seeing how the Emperor felt about it, they hesitated, at least in Rome and Italy, where they were so near him. But in Africa people were extremely excitable. The pagans scratched on walls and carried through the streets the sacrilegious symbol of the "ass's head."¹¹ On the other hand, some Christians, who had been worked up by Tertullian's reckless preaching, even refused to serve in the imperial army. Of this number was that soldier, praised by Tertullian in his *De corona*

¹⁰ Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 263 ff.

¹¹ Allard, *Histoire des pers.*, II, 29-53.

militis.¹² Most of the Christians rightly protested against these compromising acts of rashness. Not so Tertullian. He became more and more stirred up, and in his paradoxical and blustering writings glorified them. The enemies of the Christians were not slow in using Tertullian's violence of speech to influence the Emperor.

Popular clamor, clever insinuations by the literary men at court, imprudence on the part of some Christians who adopted the tone of the fiery polemic, and other causes combined at the beginning of the third century to urge the Emperor to take some measures of repression against the Christians. Septimius Severus yielded. He did not purpose introducing any new legislation touching those who were born of Christian parents. But he was determined to prevent new conversions. While on a visit to Syria, he issued a decree which is thus summed up by his historian Spartianus: "Under penalty of severe punishment, he forbade anyone becoming a Jew or a Christian." ¹³

"The decree was more than an attack upon freedom of conscience: it was an explicit decree of persecution. Up to the beginning of the third century, the existing laws seemed to be sufficient against the Christians. In fact they had made many martyrs. Yet they did not prevent the development of the Church. Severus determined to cut off at its root a growth that troubled his distrustful policy. He forbade anyone to make another a Christian, or anyone to become a Christian, for the decree has this double meaning." ¹⁴ A new crime was listed in the penal code of the Empire. And for this new crime there was put in force a new procedure more terrible than the former. "Therefore, to initiate a legal proceeding against

¹² Allard, *ibidem*, pp. 31-38.

¹³ "*Judaeos fieri sub gravi poena vetuit; idem etiam de christianis sanxit.*" (Spartianus, *Severus*, 17, in *Historiae Augustae Scriptores sex.*)

¹⁴ Allard, *op. cit.*, II, 62. The words of the decree forbade "*christianos fieri.*"

the Christians, it was necessary to run the risk of making a formal accusation, in accordance with Trajan's rescript.¹⁵ Now, however, converts and those who helped in a conversion, were brought under a special law and procedure. Against them the magistrates could act of their own accord, without waiting for an accusation to be brought. And this category of Christians was large in the third century. Converts were far more numerous than lifelong Christians. Tertullian, though extreme in the way he expresses his thought, is fundamentally correct when he says: 'Nobody is born a Christian; he becomes one.' ”¹⁶

St. Perpetua

At Rome, in Africa, and in Asia Minor the most terrible persecution broke loose. Among the illustrious martyrs of these persecutions, we shall make special mention of St. Perpetua and her companions, of St. Potamiana, and of St. Andeol.

The Acts of St. Perpetua and her companions are "one of the purest and most charming monuments of Christian antiquity."¹⁷ Part of them was written by Perpetua and Saturus or, on the basis of their disclosures, by one of the Christians who visited them in prison. Another part, as Tillemont supposes, and as Aubé and Doulcet accept, is an extract from the court records of the African proconsulate or at least of notes written down at the martyrs' trial.¹⁸ In the proconsulate of Minutius Timinianus, probably at Tuburbium near Carthage, or perhaps at Carthage itself, there were arrested Revocatus

¹⁵ Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, 4.

¹⁶ *Apol.*, 18; cf. *De testimonio animae*, 1; Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

¹⁷ Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

¹⁸ Aubé, *Les Chrétiens dans l'empire romain*, p. 224; Doulcet, *Les Rapports de l'Eglise chrétienne avec l'Etat romain*, p. 149.

and Felicitas (slaves), Saturninus and Secundus, and Vibia Perpetua, a young married woman of good family. All of them were catechumens who were receiving religious instruction from a Christian named Saturus. Saturus was not present when they were arrested, but he surrendered to the authorities, so that his lot might not be separated from the fate of those whose instructor he was, or rather that, being imprisoned along with them, he might complete their training for membership in the Church.¹⁹ At first they were confined in private houses under the guard of the *custodia privata*,²⁰ and were soon baptized. Perpetua, whilst being baptized, asked one thing of the Holy Ghost: that her body might be able to endure the tortures.

Her prayer was answered. The Acts clearly set forth this noble young woman's character as candid, alert, joyful. In the very hour of her death she says: "During my life I have always been cheerful; I shall be even more cheerful in the next life."²¹ Her aged father, the only pagan in her family, at first urged her to worship the gods. "Father," she said, "do you see this vase on the ground?" "Yes," he answered. "Can you call it anything but a vase?" To which he replied: "No, indeed." She then said to him: "So too I cannot call myself anything but a Christian."²²

The newly baptized were soon obliged to change their comparative freedom for a gloomy dungeon. The oppressive heat of the prison and the indelicate promiscuity of numerous prisoners were a painful suffering for Perpetua; but even more

¹⁹ Ruinart, Preface to the *Passion de sainte Perpétue*, p. 83; Pillet, *Histoire de sainte Perpétue*, pp. 63-67.

²⁰ Rambaud, *Le Droit criminel romain dans les Actes des martyrs*, p. 30.

²¹ Ruinart, *Acta sincera*, p. 92.

²² This comparison may have been suggested to Perpetua by the symbolism of Christian art of that time, in which a vase was often carved on the tombs as an emblem of the Christian. (Northecote, *Roma Sotteranea*, II, 83.)

painful was the separation from the infant she was nursing. Shortly afterwards her baby was brought to her. "Then," says Perpetua, "I felt no more suffering. My dungeon became a fond abode, which I preferred to any other."

As the time for her trial drew near, her father hastened to her. Overwhelmed with grief, he tried again and again to persuade her, saying: "Be mindful of your old father. You have been my darling child above all your brothers. Do not make me an object of shame. Think of your baby, who will not be able to live without you." "In this manner," she says, "did my father speak to me. He knelt at my feet, calling me now, not his daughter, but his lady. And I felt pity for his white hair. I tried to reassure him, saying: 'At the trial, God's will be done.' And my father went away less desolate."

The martyrs were summoned before the procurator Hilarianus. The magistrate first put the women aside. Addressing Saturus, he said: "Young man, offer sacrifice; do not think yourself better than the princes." Saturus replied: "I think myself above the princes of this world if I am worthy to suffer for the Prince of the world to come." The two women were then brought forward. Felicitas was questioned first. She said: "I am a Christian. I despise all earthly things for God." Perpetua was then asked: "What do you say? Will you sacrifice?" Smilingly she answered: "I am what my name signifies: I do not change."²³ The scene becomes suddenly pitiful. Perpetua tells us: "On a sudden my old father appeared, carrying my child. 'Have pity on the child,' he said. Then Hilarianus commanded: 'Sacrifice for the health of the emperors.' To this I replied: 'I will not sacrifice.' As my father kept standing there, Hilarianus had him driven away with a rod. I felt the blows of the rod as though I myself had been struck, so much did I pity my father's age. Then the judge delivered the sentence, by which all of us were condemned to

²³ "*Sum et nominis mei sequor auctoritatem ut sim Perpetua.*"

the beasts; and we joyfully went down into the prison.”²⁴

When the martyrs entered the amphitheater, Perpetua was singing. Revocatus, Saturninus, and Saturus faced Hilarianus and said to him: “You have judged us, but God will judge you.” The beasts were let loose upon them. Revocatus and Saturninus were first attacked by a leopard, then torn by a bear. When another leopard leaped upon Saturus and the martyr’s blood began to flow, the mob sneeringly cried out: “See him washed, see him baptized!” Perpetua and Felicitas were each wrapped in a net and exposed to the attack of an infuriated cow, which tossed Perpetua in the air and let her fall on her back. In this fall her garment was torn. That modesty might be preserved even in her death, she gathered the folds of her torn garment; then with a clasp she fastened her hair, which had been undone by the tossing and the fall, not wishing, in the glory of her martyrdom, to die with her hair dishevelled, like a woman in mourning. When the time came, according to the usual practice, for the martyrs to receive the *coup de grâce*, they gave one another the kiss of peace, as was done during the sacrifice of the Mass. Then each offered his throat to the knife. The gladiator appointed to give Perpetua the death blow, trembled; his knife was ill aimed and struck her in the side. Perpetua, firmer and calmer than her executioner, took his hand which had dealt the awkward blow, and placed the point of the dagger to her breast.²⁵

²⁴ Duruy (*History of Rome*, VII, 64) writes: “This young woman who went to her death crushing the hearts of all her family is a heroine of a peculiar nature.” Allard makes a fitting reply, when he says: “These words of Duruy are senseless, or else they mean that a real hero, having to choose between the duty of confessing his faith and the fear of saddening those whom he loves, ought to turn his back on his duty.” (*Histoire des pers.*, II, 116.)

²⁵ Ruinart, *op. cit.*, p. 95. The history of Christianity in Africa owes many fine discoveries to Father Delattre. One of the most notable has reference to these seven martyrs. After long and patient labors at Carthage, he succeeded, in 1906 and 1907, in unearthing, from some almost wholly destroyed ruins, nearly

St. Potamiana

St. Potamiana was martyred at Alexandria about the same time. She was a young slave, as pure as she was beautiful. Her master had conceived a violent passion for her. Furious at being unable to triumph over his slave's virtue, he denounced her as a Christian. She was summoned before the prefect Aquila, who threatened to give her over to the brutality of the gladiators. But she remained unshaken. She and her mother were sentenced to be burned alive. A cauldron was prepared, full of boiling pitch, into which the young slave was let down. She died bravely amid horrible torture.²⁶

Martyrs of Asia and Gaul

In the early Church of Alexandria, St. Leonides, the father of Origen, was beheaded for the faith.²⁷ Many other Christians met the same fate. In the younger churches of Gaul, there also perished by the sword Felix, Fortunatus, and Achilles, apostles of Valence, Ferreol a priest, and Ferrutius a deacon, apostles of Besançon. Along the Rhone, in the country of the Helvetii, a Christian missionary met a more atrocious death at Bergoiate. His name was Andeol. Tradition relates that the Emperor Septimius Severus, in 208, while passing along the Rhone on his way to make war in Britain, saw Andeol preaching the gospel to a large gathering of people at Bergoiate. This was an open disregard of the imperial edict. The Emperor was furious, leaped down from his chariot, ordered Andeol to be stretched out on a rack, then had his head

seven thousand epigraphic fragments. Of these, thirty-five, when carefully pieced together, finally gave the following inscription: "*Hic sunt martyres Saturus, Saturninus, Revocatus, Secundus, Felicitas, Perpetua.*"

²⁶ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, v; Palladius, *Lausiac History*, chap. 3; cf. Tillemont, *Mémoires*, vol. III, note on St. Potamiana.

²⁷ Eusebius, VI. ii.

sawed off with a wooden saw. "Today this lowly victim has what no Caesar has, a tomb still standing and still visited, a city bearing his name, pilgrims who love him and pray to him." ²⁸ The city of Bergoiate is now the city of Bourg-saint-Andéol in the Vivarais district.

Successors of Septimius Severus

The persecution gradually died out after the death of Septimius Severus (A. D. 211). His four immediate successors showed no hostility toward the Christians. Caracalla (211-217) appears to have received from his Christian nurse ²⁹ an instinctive regard for the followers of Christ. Elagabalus (218-222) hoped to unite all religions under the supreme worship of the Syrian god whose name he bore. Alexander Severus (222-235), in his domestic chapel, honored together Abraham and Orpheus, Apollonius of Tyana and Christ.³⁰ His mother Mammaea had dealings with St. Hippolytus and Origen. Eusebius says that Origen "even lived near her for a while and explained to her a great number of matters about the glory of God and the divine teaching."

The four pontiffs who governed the Roman Church during this period of calm were not for this reason free from serious care. In fact there were few epochs more violently disturbed by heresy and schism, and few trials were more painful to the Church of Rome than the defection stirred up by the most zealous of her former defenders, Tertullian, and the sad events that for twenty-five years made an obstinate antipope of one of the most conspicuous priests of the Roman clergy, a future martyr, St. Hippolytus. But these four popes were equal to their task.

²⁸ Champagny, *Les Césars du III^e siècle*, I, 236.

²⁹ Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, 4.

³⁰ Eusebius, VI, xxi, 3.

Pope St. Zephyrinus

Zephyrinus governed the Church from 198 to 217.³¹ He was a Roman by birth, a priest of simple, kind, and charitable character. The antipope Hippolytus and the Montanist Tertullian, with whom he was in conflict, accused him of ignorance, avarice, and weakness, saying that he allowed himself to be dominated by his secretary Callistus. These charges do not stand up under an impartial examination of the facts. The truth is that, in his doctrinal decisions, he was concerned much more with following tradition than with examining the philosophical arguments of his opponents; hence the contempt with which he was regarded by those who prided themselves on their knowledge. We know also that, although he received many offerings, he spent them generously for the poor; hence the charge of avarice made against him. He judged it proper to moderate the excessive severity introduced into the Church in the matter of adulterers; this action on his part led to his being charged with blameworthy condescension to sinners. The charge of his being unduly dominated by Callistus cannot be maintained when we consider that at the death of Zephyrinus the clergy unanimously chose Callistus to succeed him, and that Callistus in his pontificate gave many proofs of moderation and prudence.³²

Pope St. Callistus

Callistus I, like Zephyrinus, was a native of Rome. He occupied the see of Peter from 218 to 222.³³ Hippolytus and Tertullian both picture him in an unfavorable light. But if we examine the facts adduced by these writers and strip them of

³¹ *Liber pontificalis*, I, 139.

³² Döllinger (*Hippolytus and Callistus*) clears Pope Zephyrinus of the charges brought against him by Hippolytus and Tertullian.

³³ *Liber pontificalis*, I, 141.

malevolent interpretations we must absolve Callistus from the grave charges brought against him. His life was a variegated one. While a slave of a high officer in Emperor Commodus' palace, he was entrusted by his master with the handling of certain funds; in the course of his financial operations, he lost not only his master's money, but also money which had been entrusted to him by certain Christian brethren. He took to flight out of fear of his master, who succeeded in catching him, and had him imprisoned in a dungeon. But, considering that the best way of recovering his money would be to free his slave, whose ability and honesty he knew, he had Callistus released. The latter was soon on the road to recuperate the whole amount by making certain Jews, who had tricked him, disgorge. These Jews took revenge on him by denouncing him as a Christian. The unfortunate Callistus was sentenced to the mines of Sardinia. When Pope Victor besought the powerful intervention of Marcia for the freedom of the confessors of Sardinia, the name of the poor slave was not on the list; but the procurator liberated him at the request of Hyacinth, the papal legate. Callistus returned to Rome, where Pope Victor provided him with an annual pension.

The constancy in misfortune shown by this slave, his intelligence, the regard of his fellow-prisoners, marked him out for the choice of the clergy for the important office of deacon. His conscientious performance of the duties of this office made Zephyrinus decide to call him to his side as his chief helper. At the death of Zephyrinus, he was unanimously chosen to succeed him. In the see of Peter this former slave showed not only practical qualities of a high order, but, in the difficult questions he was called upon to solve, he revealed a prudent and enlightened mind, as also a sure and delicate tactfulness. In the arduous difficulties of the Trinitarian dispute, we see him reject the extreme opinions of Sabellius and also those of Hippolytus. In the hotly disputed question of

penance, he stoutly claimed for the hierarchical authority the power of remitting the sins of the flesh; but in estimating the penalty he showed himself ready to take account of the intercession of the confessors of the faith.³⁴ As stated by the learned critic who has published the first thorough study of the work of this pope, nearly everything for which he was blamed turns to his credit.³⁵

Popes St. Urban I and St. Pontianus

We know very little of the pontificates of Urban I (222–230) and Pontianus (230–235). Eusebius barely mentions these two pontiffs,³⁶ and the brief notice of them in the *Liber Pontificalis* is not very reliable. They sustained the contest against the antipope Hippolytus. Pontianus, who was exiled with him to the mines of Sardinia, received his repentance and abjuration. In a word, the painful conflict carried on by the four popes we have just been considering, was a conflict of moderation against violence, of mercy against ultrarigourism, of prudence against inconsiderate enthusiasm.

Montanism in Africa

The courage of the martyrs has sometimes been explained as an artificial enthusiasm, “an intoxication of the amphi-

³⁴ What Hippolytus and Tertullian never forgave Callistus, was the moderation wherewith he prudently avoided extreme measures in ruling the Church. “Rope-walker” is the insult they cast at him in their pamphlets. Tertullian (*De pudicitia*, x, 9–11) says: “Come, you rope-walker upon modesty and chastity and every kind of sexual sanctity, who, by the instrumentality of a discipline of this nature remote from the path of truth, mount with uncertain footstep upon a most slender thread, balancing flesh with spirit, moderating your animal principle by faith, tempering your eye by fear; why are you thus wholly engaged in a single step? . . . If any wavering of the flesh, any distraction of the mind, any wandering of the eye, shall chance to shake you down from your equipoise, ‘God is good,’ . . . A second repentance will await you.”

³⁵ Döllinger, *op. cit.*

³⁶ *H. E.*, VI, xxi and xxiii.

theater." The authentic Acts of the Christian martyrs give the lie to this false explanation. It was not merely before the crowds that the Christians had to defend their faith; it was also in the intimacy of their own family circle; it was in the presence of their pagan neighbors; it was under circumstances that could not give them any renown among men, that Christians of all ages, countries, and conditions, confessed their faith with a calmness and precision that excludes any hypothesis of morbid exaltation. But the censure directed against the martyrs of the Church does fully apply to the sect that started with Montanus. Certain apocryphal Acts are manifestly a legendary amplification of the truth; the persons mentioned in the accounts have no connection with the Roman world. And they describe the judges and the accused as indulging in repartee with equal fury. Most of these fanciful documents are of Montanist origin.³⁷

The Montanist heresy passed from the East to Africa, probably visiting Rome on the way. When it reached Africa it had given up its early extravagances and the spirit of rebellion which marked it at its birth. At least, in the first years of the third century, its presence in Africa seems to be a slow infiltration into a few Catholic communities. However, when the Montanists gave up their schismatic projects, they did not abandon their purpose of purifying the Church of its so-called

³⁷ On the basis of certain expressions in the prologue and epilogue of the Acts of St. Perpetua and her companions, as the text has reached us, some writers (e. g., Basnage) deny the orthodoxy of these illustrious martyrs. It is very likely that the author of the two passages was a Montanist. But there can be no doubt of the orthodoxy of St. Perpetua and her fellow-martyrs. Both external and internal evidence is at one on this point. (See Freppel, *Tertullien*, I, 347 ff.) A. d'Alès (*La Théologie de Tertullien*, pp. 442 ff.) uses Freppel's arguments to refute the conclusions of Nöldechen and certain other critics. The article by d'Alès, "*L'Auteur de la Passio Perpetuae*" in the *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, concludes as follows: "The *Passio Perpetuae* contains several details which seem to us to show the hand of Tertullian. . . . The Montanism imputed to Perpetua and her companions, we regard as a legend which owes its origin to this almost certain fact, that the hagiographer of the martyrs of 203 was Tertullian the Montanist."

weaknesses. They affected a stricter morality, a more inflexible doctrine, and a heroism more disdainful of human considerations. By this attitude they set themselves up as reformers of a fallen society.

Tertullian and Montanism

It was this claim that seduced Tertullian. His lofty mind and positive character inclined him to such a doctrine. At the outset of his career, the zealous African's orthodoxy was unspotted. As a Christian, as a priest, as a defender of doctrine, he was devoted to the Gospel as explained by the practice of the Church. Only one tendency disturbed the harmony of this great character and unsullied genius: this was his inclination to exaggerate everything in morals as in dogma, in practice as in theory, to enlarge everything beyond bounds, both in good and in evil. In his *Exhortation to the Martyrs*,³⁸ written in 197, he compares them to gladiators "who fancy themselves more winsome from the bites and scars of the contest." Such words show us that he was already on the descent leading him to Montanism.

Tertullian was also tempted by another error of Montanus' followers—millenarianism. Our Lord, comparing the smallness and insecurity of earthly things with the greatness of eternal things, endeavored to keep His hearers' eyes fixed upon the coming of the future kingdom, a coming that was imminent from many points of view, if only by each one's death or by the extraordinary manifestations of God's power, such as the destruction of the Jewish nation and the inauguration of an era of grace. Many Christians, at the beginning of the third century, believed the end of the world to be near. This was not enough for Tertullian's imagination. In his work *Against Marcion*, which appeared about 207, Christ's tri-

³⁸ *Exhortation to the Martyrs*, 5.

umphant coming assumes the form of an Oriental mirage: ³⁹ besides the glory of a heavenly kingdom, there are the splendors of an earthly kingdom, to last a thousand years. This millenarianism was not yet condemned, but it was vigorously opposed by a certain priest, Caius, and by the school of Alexandria; it was Tertullian's second step outside the confines of sound orthodoxy.⁴⁰ He now takes a third step. The Savior had promised the Apostles to send them the Holy Ghost or Paraclete. The Montanists were not satisfied with the fulfilment of this promise in the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles. They contrasted the kingdom of the Paraclete with the kingdom of the Gospel, and declared that this third kingdom had been fully manifested only by Montanus.⁴¹ Tertullian was led astray by this curious theory: in a way, he leaped into it. About 207, in his treatise *On the Veiling of Virgins*, he wrote: "A time for everything. . . . The germ bursts the flower, and from the flower the fruit opens. . . . Righteousness was first in a rudimentary state, having a natural fear of God: from that stage it advanced, through the Law and the Prophets, to infancy; from that stage it passed, through the

³⁹ *Against Marcion*, IV, xxiv.

⁴⁰ See Gry, *Le Millénarisme dans ses origines et son développement*. This question of millenarianism has proved of very great interest to a considerable number of historians and theologians. Harnack propounds certain theories that are more brilliant than solid. According to him, millenarianism, a manifestation of enthusiasm in the early Church, was originally an essential and official part of Christianity, especially in the minds of the people. Its decline was caused by the infiltration of the doctrine of the Logos; its final extirpation "is perhaps the most momentous fact in the history of Christianity in the East." (Harnack, *History of Dogma*, II, 300.) The truth is, on the contrary, that its decline was owing to these facts: (1) that the basis of millenarianism is found neither in the Gospels nor in the Epistles (Gry, *op. cit.*, pp. 43, 46, 61); (2) that the view of millennialist writers does not necessarily reflect that of the Christian people among whom they lived. This fact is evidenced by the way Trypho speaks in his Dialogue with Justin. The former practically says to Justin: "Are you a millenarian, then?" We could scarcely understand such a remark put on the lips of Trypho by St. Justin, if the millenarian opinion was common in his time.

⁴¹ Some even made a distinction between the Holy Ghost and the Paraclete, placing the latter much higher in the divine hierarchy.

Gospel, to the fervor of youth: now, through the Paraclete, it is settling into maturity: He has succeeded to Christ.”⁴² In the course of this treatise Tertullian shows a firm purpose of not separating from the Church;⁴³ yet it is impossible not to see in this passage a decisive though unconscious step towards the Montanist heresy. The notion of a new phase of humanity, superior to that inaugurated by Christ, inspires nearly all the subsequent errors of the fiery apologist, particularly that which concerns flight from persecution and second marriage.

Is it right to flee from persecutors? This is the question that many Christians asked themselves in the reign of Septimius Severus. Montanus, in his desire to outdo Christian morality on every point, recklessly replied that it is not right. Tertullian agreed with this view. Christ said: “When they shall persecute you in this city, flee into another”; but, said the Montanists, He was speaking for His contemporaries. The times have changed. The Holy Ghost, breathing upon the world, no longer allows such cowardice. These maxims are proclaimed by Tertullian in 212 and 213 in the *Scorpiae* and the treatise on *Fleeing in Time of Persecution*. Moreover, if Christ could replace the polygamy of ancient times by monogamy and praise continence, why could not the Paraclete, a hundred and sixty years after the Apostles, give the law of chastity its final crown and, if not condemn marriage as an evil, at least condemn second marriages as adulterous? This is the theory which Tertullian maintains after 213, in his treatise on *Monogamy*.

From that time forward, Tertullian’s Montanism grows more emphatic day by day. At bottom, each of his new doctrines was a blow at traditional dogma. In a general way, his conception of a Church receiving its inspiration from the

⁴² *The Veiling of Virgins*, chap. 1.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, chap. 2.

Paraclete, weakens the authority of the Law and of Christ, opens the way to private inspirations, "substitutes for the visible and hierarchical Church, the heir of the Apostles' teaching and power, a Church that has no priesthood or any other investiture but that of the Spirit."⁴⁴ This final step he takes in his last works, notably in his *De Pudicitia*. The Church to which he will still grant the right of remitting sins now is merely an indiscernible Church: "The Church, it is true, will forgive sins; but it will be the Church of the Spirit, by means of a spiritual man; not the Church which consists of a number of bishops."⁴⁵

Thus Montanism, at first considering itself nothing more than an awakening of the Christian spirit, ended in the negation of a visible Church. The adherence of the great African polemic gave it a new lease of life. The sect spread in the East and in the West. In Africa, its followers boastfully called themselves Tertullianists. They still bore that name in the time of St. Augustine, who brought their last survivors back to the Church.⁴⁶

The heads of the Church, seconded by vigorous apologists, had long combated the Montanist errors. Among the defenders of the good cause Eusebius cites Apollinarius of Hierapolis, Miltiades, Serapion of Antioch, Apollonius, and an unnamed person who wrote about 211. Apollinarius, bishop of Hierapolis, for several days publicly debated with the followers of Montanus. So successfully did he refute them that they withdrew in confusion, and "the priests of the region asked him to write out a memoir of what had been said against them."⁴⁷ From the fragments which Eusebius records of these apologists, we learn that the Montanists gloried espe-

⁴⁴ D'Alès, *La Théologie de Tertullien*, p. 492.

⁴⁵ Tertullian, *On Modesty*, chap. 21.

⁴⁶ St. Augustine, *Contra haereses*, chap. 86.

⁴⁷ Eusebius, *H. E.*, V, xvi, 4.

cially in the visions of Montanus, the ecstasies of Priscilla and Maximilla, and of several martyrs to whom they laid claim. But the defenders of the hierarchical Church confidently assailed them on the ground of the scandalous conduct of their leaders,⁴⁸ pointed to the incoherence and wretchedness of their so-called revelations,⁴⁹ questioned the number and quality of their supposed martyrs,⁵⁰ and cited the authority of the episcopate against their claims.⁵¹ Several councils of the bishops of Phrygia and the vicinity met to condemn them. Mention is made of one at Iconium and of another at Sunnada.⁵²

Papal Condemnation of Montanism

The bishops of the West were not so well informed on the beginnings of Montanism, which moreover somewhat moderated its tenets there, and at first appeared to be merely a doctrine of moral renovation. The bishops, therefore, were less prompt in disapproving it. Pope Eleutherius, impressed with the difficulty by the letter sent him in 177 by the Lyons martyrs from their prison, seems not to have settled the question definitely; nor did his successor Victor. Pope Zephyrinus appears to have hesitated for a while as to what attitude to take. Tertullian relates that Zephyrinus sent letters of communion to the Montanist churches, but upon receipt of new information from Praxeas, a confessor of Asia, he changed his decision and revoked his letters even before they had reached their destination.⁵³ Whatever may be the facts of this particular incident, the heresy was proscribed, and "what is really important is the origin and character of the primitive movement, and the attitude of the Church. However eagerly

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, V, xviii, 2, 3, 5, 6.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, xviii, 1.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, xvi, 20.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, xix, 2, 3.

⁵² Hefele, *Councils*, I, 89 f.

⁵³ Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, I.

the speedy return of Christ was looked for towards the end of the second century, however deep was the respect then felt for the prophetic spirit and its various manifestations, the Church was not drawn away by Montanus from the true path; neither prophecy in general nor the expectation of the Last Day was forbidden; but orthodox tradition was upheld against religious vagaries, and the authority of the hierarchy against the claims of private inspiration.”⁵⁴

As for that great man who placed his genius at the service of the heresy, the Church, while condemning his errors, continued to appeal to the immortal works he had written in defense of the truth. “The Fathers of the third century are careful not to mention him by name; but St. Cyprian and Novatian sought inspiration in his writings. The Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries have no hesitation in speaking of him by name, and variously mingle praise of him with blame. This man, who exercised a profound and at times disturbing influence on his period, remains one of the most notable witnesses of the ancient faith. That department of knowledge which is interested in origins continues to seek light about the beginnings of Western theology by questioning him whom Bossuet calls the weighty Tertullian.”⁵⁵

Clement of Alexandria

Tertullian is beyond question the most powerful writer of the third century. But he is neither its greatest scholar nor its deepest thinker: these titles belong to Origen. But Origen

⁵⁴ Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 205. In Asia Minor there was an excessive reaction against Montanism. St. Irenaeus tells of people who, rather than admit the manifestations of the Holy Ghost, rejected the Gospel of St. John, in which the effusion of the Holy Spirit is foretold. (*Adversus haereses*, III, xi, 9.) Are these heretics the same as the Alogi mentioned by St. Epiphanius? Döllinger (*Hippolytus and Callistus*, pp. 273 ff.) considers these Alogi as different from the Antimontanists.

⁵⁵ D'Alès, *op. cit.*, p. 498.

cannot be separated from him who was his master, Clement of Alexandria, nor from the great school which he so brilliantly personified, nor from the whole intellectual movement which he represented.

About the year 180, Pantaenus, who was then directing the Didascalia of Alexandria, saw the arrival of a Greek philosopher. This philosopher said that he had gone through Greece, southern Italy, Syria, and Palestine in search of truth, and had nowhere found it complete. According to his own words, "he found rest in Egypt, like a hunter who at last discovers his prey."⁵⁶ The name of the newcomer was Titus Flavius Clemens. Probably he was born at Athens.⁵⁷ As a result of his journeys and studies he possessed a wealth of information and experience which led St. Jerome to call him "the most erudite of all ecclesiastical writers."⁵⁸ Pantaenus kept him at his side and, about 190, made him his assistant in the work of teaching. At Pantaenus' death (*circa* 200), Clement succeeded him at the head of the school. He was then a priest, as he tells us in his *Pedagogue*.⁵⁹

Under his direction the organization of the Didascalia was soon changed. It became a great official school, a sort of university, dependent upon the bishop, who thereafter had the right to appoint the director of the school and his assistants.⁶⁰ Its scope broadened. Three currents of ideas at that time threatened to carry men's minds outside Christian truth. These were Stoicism, Platonism, and Gnosticism, which, though its organization was undermined, still survived by its spirit. Clement recognized these three currents, as he had been momentarily drawn into them before his conversion. But the new teacher assumed an even greater task. If ever a school

⁵⁶ Clement, *Stromata*, I, i.

⁵⁷ St. Epiphanius, *Haereses*, xxxii, 6.

⁵⁸ St. Jerome, Letter to Magnus (*Letters*, 70).

⁵⁹ Clement, *Pedagogus*, I, vi.

⁶⁰ St. Jerome, *Catal.*, 34; Letter to Paula (*Letters*, 36).

deserved the honor of having been a complete moral training for its disciples, it was the school of Alexandria, as organized by Clement. We have proof of this in the famous trilogy in which he sums up his whole teaching: the *Exhortation to the Gentiles*, the *Pedagogue*, and the *Stromata*.

The *Exhortation to the Gentiles* is an apology, but an apology addressed to the faithful and seeking to combat in them the practical paganism not yet overcome in morals and surviving in countless unconscious prejudices.

Rescued from the pagan spirit by the *Exhortation to the Gentiles*, the man whom Clement addresses is trained in the Christian life by the *Pedagogue*. This is a treatise on moral education. Its delicate psychology and practical advice remain of permanent value for all ages.⁶¹

The *Stromata* initiates the disciple into the Gnosis, as Clement calls it, that is, the concept of complete Christianity with faith as its foundation, the knowledge for disciplining his efforts in the search of truth, virtue of directing his apostolate among men and of raising his soul to God by the purest contemplation. This is a strange and surprising book, encumbered with a large number of varied details, well named *Stromata*, i. e., *Tapestries*, *Medlies*, *Miscellanies*. Its lack of method is intentional, for, as the author says, he wishes to eliminate the artificial, not to go beyond nature, but to conduct his disciple on a mountain with a variety of perspectives, not in a symmetrically laid-out garden.⁶² Its only unity consists in an ever identical Christian spirit, a constant elevation and a determined concern for perfection. Thus this book, beginning with didactic instruction that is in a way commonplace, ends with the loftiest mystical elevations.

This word *Gnosis*, or Knowledge, so repeatedly coming from

⁶¹ See P. Lhande, *Jeunesse*, a little rule for home training, according to Clement of Alexandria, Paris, 1912.

⁶² *Stromata*, VI, i; VII, xviii.

the pen of the Alexandrian philosopher, should not mislead us by its etymology. For Clement, Gnosis is the state of perfection; the Gnostic is the perfect Christian.⁶³ What constitutes the essence of Gnosis is, therefore, not knowledge, but virtue, love. "By love," he says, "the Gnostic is already in the midst of that in which he is destined to be, and does not desire anything, having, as far as possible, the very thing desired. Nor will he, therefore, eagerly desire to be assimilated to what is beautiful, possessing, as he does, beauty by love. Carried to God on the wings of love, he lives a free man on the ruins of all his desires. He is no longer present here below, but wholly with the object of love."⁶⁴ . . . Just as weight in a stone, so the knowledge of such a one is incapable of being lost. He will employ caution so as to avoid sinning, and consideration to prevent the loss of virtue."⁶⁵ Clement takes pleasure in multiplying and varying the details of this picture; it forms an essential part of his apologetics. Whatever may still trouble his brethren's souls, by way of appeal or regret—the Stoic's blessed impassibility, the love that raises a Platonist's soul towards ideal beauty, the fulness of knowledge which Gnosticism promises its followers—all this the author of the *Stromata* finds, and shows in the soul of the complete Christian, of the true mystic who has reached the summit of the mount of perfection.

Later false mystics attempted to make it appear that their errors had the sanction of Clement.⁶⁶ Like many mystics, he sometimes fails to weigh his words. "Yet his great exaggera-

⁶³ Here we have something like what we have already noted with regard to the Logos. "Gnosis" and "Gnosticism" belong to that class of words in which a whole epoch places its ideal of perfection and happiness, as at other periods the words "Civilization" or "Culture" or "Progress" became symbols of a people's aspirations.

⁶⁴ *Stromata*, VI, ix.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, VII, vii.

⁶⁶ *E. g.*, Molinos and Madame Guyon.

tions convey their restrictions in their very excess, and it is easy to see that they need correction. But when this is applied by the author himself, the meaning is unmistakable.”⁶⁷ In one place Clement says that “a Gnostic’s virtue is incapable of being lost”;⁶⁸ but he adds that this fact is owing to the Gnostic’s efforts and foresight, to his good inclination, aided by divine grace.⁶⁹ He declares that perfect love banishes every selfish motive of fear or hope; but a consideration of his doctrine as a whole clearly shows that he excludes from perfect love only motives that come from the hope of temporal advantage, of a reward other than God himself.⁷⁰ He describes the perfect Christian as having mind and heart firmly fixed upon an unchangeable center, that is God; not that the perfect Christian is to rest satisfied with inactive contemplation, but that in this contemplation he may find a means of more rapidly and directly advancing to his end. He says: “As, then, those who at sea are held by an anchor, pull at the anchor, but do not drag it to them, but drag themselves to the anchor; so those who, according to the Gnostic life, draw God towards them, imperceptibly bring themselves to God.”⁷¹

When Clement speaks of God, the Trinity, the human nature of Christ, the Christian life, he sometimes employs expressions wanting in exactness and precision. But these defects are nearly always in the words rather than in the thought. Most of the time they are due to the imperfection of a theological terminology still in process of formation. Thus, when speaking of the Divine Persons, at times he goes so far in expressing their unity, that he seems to make them modes of one

⁶⁷ Bossuet, *Tradition des nouveaux mystiques* (*Œuvres*, Lebel ed., XXVIII, 28).

⁶⁸ *Stromata*, VII, vii.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Freppel, *Clément d’Alexandrie*, p. 466; cf. Bossuet, *Cinquième écrit sur les maximes des saints*.

⁷¹ *Stromata*, IV, xxiii.

and the same substance and thus invites the charge of modalism.⁷² Other passages where he seems to carry too far the primal dependence of the Son upon the Father, have laid him open to the charge of subordinationism.⁷³ He divides all Christians into two categories, those who rely on faith alone, and those who rise to Gnosis; but, on the other hand, he declares that Gnosis presupposes faith, and that faith contains Gnosis in germ; so his distinction has nothing in common with that which, in the false Gnosticism, separates the hylics, the psychics, and the pneumatics, granting to these last scandalous license.⁷⁴

The many inexactitudes in Clement's writings and their evident exaggerations have led some theologians to pass severe judgment on his doctrine.⁷⁵ But apparently this was not the reason that decided Pope Benedict XIV to strike his name from the martyrology, but rather the fact that, before the appearance of his name in the martyrology of Usuard (eleventh century), no trace has been found of any public veneration paid to this ecclesiastical writer in any Church whatever, with either the explicit or the tacit sanction of a bishop.⁷⁶

⁷² *Pedagogue*, I, 7 f.; III, 12; *Stromata*, V, vi; VII, 12.

⁷³ *Stromata*, IV, 25 f.; V, 14; VII, 2.

⁷⁴ *Pedagogue*, I, 6.

⁷⁵ *E. g.*, Petau considers that Clement's writings contain the germs of Arianism. On Clement's doctrine and errors, see Tixeront, *History of Dogmas*, I, 243-256.

⁷⁶ Benedict XIV, *Œuvres*, VI, 119-125. There is a flavor of "that Hellenic Christianity, with its uncertain outlines and its vague and luminous horizon" in the *Odes of Solomon*, a pseudepigraphal work, traces of which are found as early as the third century. It was considered a lost writing, until the Orientalist, Rendel Harris, found it (in 1906) among some Syriac manuscripts brought from the banks of the Tigris. There are several indications that this work, which is a remarkable expression of Jewish mysticism with Gnostic tendencies, is an Egyptian work, and "we can easily imagine this pseudo-Solomon writing his poems in the atmosphere where Clement grew up, perhaps not far from his master Pantaenus." (D'Alès, in *Études*, 1911, p. 769.)

Origen

The greatest merit of Clement of Alexandria is that he trained Origen. In the main, if we disregard a few still vague but suggestive ideas regarding the ways of mysticism, Clement's personal contribution to the ecclesiastical sciences is of little importance. The author of the *Pedagogue* was an educator, a marvelous waker of souls, one of those teachers whose whole worth is in their professorial chair or in their informal converse with their pupils. Clement recognized this himself, for at the beginning of his *Stromata* he questions whether it is permissible for him to write, to confide to a dead book what is made for oral, living teaching.⁷⁷ Quite different is Origen. His works, as well as his teaching, mark the beginning of an epoch in the history of human thought. Until St. Augustine, whose authority supplanted his, all the Greek and Latin Fathers obtained inspiration from his exegesis, his apologetics, and his theology. This "labor-loving Origen," as St. Athanasius calls him,⁷⁸ not only is, like Irenaeus, a harvester of all the knowledge of his time, but, like St. Augustine, a sower of new ideas. History must pause in veneration before the person and work of this great scholar.

Origen was born of Christian parents, at Alexandria, in 185. His first instruction he received from his father Leonides; at an early age, he attended the School of Alexandria, where he heard Clement's instructions. From his earliest years the boy revealed earnest piety and an avid desire for knowledge. Eusebius says: "The life of Origen, indeed, appears to me worthy of being recorded, even from his tender infancy. It was in the tenth year of the reign of Severus, when Alexandria

⁷⁷ *Stromata*, I, i.

⁷⁸ Τοῦ φιλοπόδου Ὀριγένης, St. Athanasius, *De decretis nicaeni*, sec. 27 (Translation by J. H. Newman, in *Library of the Fathers*, VIII, 48).

and the rest of Egypt was under the government of his vice-roy Laetus, and the churches there were under the episcopal administration of Demetrius, that the flame of persecution blazed forth mightily, and many thousands were crowned with martyrdom. It was then, too, that the love of martyrdom so powerfully seized the soul of Origen, though yet an almost infant boy, that he advanced so close to encounter danger, and was eager to leap forward and rush upon the conflict. . . . His mother concealed his clothes in order to compel him to remain at home.”⁷⁹ From childhood, under his father’s direction, he devoted himself with utmost eagerness to the study of the Scriptures. “It was not sufficient for him merely to read what was simple and obvious in the sacred books, but he sought also what was beyond this, into the deeper senses of the text, and was busily employed in such speculations even at that age.”⁸⁰ Leonides moderated the boy’s ardor, but “they say that frequently, when standing over his sleeping son, he uncovered his breast and, as a shrine consecrated by the divine Spirit, reverently kissed it and congratulated himself upon his favored offspring.”⁸¹

In 203, the illustrious head of the School of Alexandria, proclaiming courageous and prudent principles regarding martyrdom, condemned both the cowardly and the presumptuous.⁸² He judged it proper to retire to Cappadocia, to his disciple, Bishop Alexander, whose church he administered after Alexander was imprisoned for the faith. The great Christian School might have remained silent a long time, if the bishop, Demetrius, had not placed at its head the ardent disciple who was already its glory. Origen was not more than eighteen years old at the time. In the very midst of persecution, the fearless young man, by dint of his extraordinary power for work,

⁷⁹ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, ii, 6.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, VI, ii.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Stromata*, IV, iv.

succeeded in gathering about his professorial chair an ever increasing number of hearers. His very success was a safeguard for him. Heretics and even pagans, among the most distinguished in the city, were eager to hear him. That he might the better fit himself to instruct such an audience, Origen resolved to undertake a methodical and searching study of philosophy. And as his guide in this study, he chose the founder of Neoplatonism, Ammonius Saccas.⁸³ He also wished to learn Hebrew and to perfect himself in philology. One of his pupils, Ambrose, placed his great wealth at Origen's service, obtaining books for him and having carried out for him all the research that he required.

About 212 Origen went to Rome, prompted by a desire to become acquainted with "the very ancient Church of the Romans,"⁸⁴ as he himself says. Beginning with the year 215, his life became extremely disturbed. A violent persecution of the Christians forced him, that year, to flee to Palestine. Although a layman, he was invited to give lectures there to the faithful in the churches. So great was his fame that, in 218, Mammaea, the mother of the future Emperor Alexander Severus, summoned him to Antioch to confer with him about the Christian religion. But at the same time Bishop Demetrius blamed him for usurping functions reserved to ecclesiastics. About 228 his friends, Bishop Theoctistus and Bishop Alexander, ordained him to the priesthood. Soon after that, about 230, he published his great theological work, *Peri Archon*, or, *The Principles*. But his bishop, Demetrius, accused him, not only of infractions against the laws of the Church, but of heresy. Two synods at Alexandria in 231 deprived him of the office of teaching and forbade him to exercise the sacerdotal ministry. A Roman council in the pontificate of Pontianus (*circa* 232) agreed in this condemnation.

⁸³ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, xix.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, xiv.

Were the condemnations of Origen motivated solely by a desire to protect orthodoxy and discipline, or did less honorable motives influence these decisions? St. Jerome thought so, and declared so in no uncertain terms.⁸⁵ Yet we must acknowledge that *The Principles*, though perfectly orthodox in its main lines, and though abounding in noble views which posterity used to advantage, contained many reckless and dangerous assertions.

Like Irenaeus at the beginning of his book on *Heresies*, and like Tertullian at the beginning of his treatise on *Prescription*, Origen began by setting down the rule of faith, from which, he says, he will never depart. This rule is the preaching of the Church, connected with the teaching of the Apostles and of Christ.⁸⁶ At the very outset of his work, the author enumerates the certain truths that we have from this teaching; they are almost the very ones we profess today when we recite the Apostles' Creed. But, in addition to these truths, ascertained with finality and which all are bound to believe, others, which God leaves to the free inquiry of scholars, form the domain for the exercise of the theologian's sagacity.

In this study, says Origen, the theologian draws from two sources: Scripture and philosophy. Sacred Scripture should be the object of our whole veneration, because it contains the word of God. But it is susceptible of three meanings: a somatic or literal sense, a psychic or moral sense, and a pneumatic or spiritual sense. There are a few passages that have only a spiritual sense. These can be recognized by the practical impossibility of taking them literally; in such case, the Chris-

⁸⁵ "Damnatur a Demetrio . . . Roma ipsa contra eum cogit senatum; non propter dogmatum novitatem, nec propter haeresim, ut nunc adversus eum rabidi canes simulant, sed quia gloriam eloquentiae ejus et scientiae ferre non poterant et illo dicente omnes muti putabantur." (St. Jerome, *Rufinus, Apol.*, II, 20.)

⁸⁶ *Principles*, Pref., 3. Save for a few fragments in Greek, there is nothing extant of this treatise except Rufinus' Latin translation, in which Rufinus strives to palliate Origen's errors, especially with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity. St. Jerome made a literal translation of it; but that has been almost totally lost.

tian will confidently pass over the figure or allegory and come directly to the mystery which it cloaks.⁸⁷ Origen, and especially his followers, would apply this last rule abusively and, on pretext of seeking a deeper sense, would too readily substitute the allegory for the letter, fancy for the rule of faith.

As he had learned from his teacher Clement, Origen held that philosophy is a very noble and lofty thing, that "perchance philosophy was given to the Greeks directly and primarily, till the Lord should call the Greeks."⁸⁸ Like his master, he also believed that philosophy is not such or such a system, but rather a method and a spirit.⁸⁹ But he who in enthusiastic youth had received the teachings of Ammonius Saccas, he who had sat at school beside Plotinus, would in spite of himself often let the Neoplatonic doctrine enter into his theology and at times vitiate it in a dangerous way.

Theology of "The Principles"

All the problems of religious philosophy which God has left to the discussion of men, Origen groups around two great questions: that of God's relations with the material world, and that of the origin of evil and its remedy.

He holds that matter is created, really created, that is, drawn forth from nothing, but that it is eternal; for, he says, if God for a single moment could have been not the Creator, he would have acquired a new perfection at a given time; He would not be the Almighty Eternal. For the same reason, God created all the beings that He could draw from nothing; our world is but a moment in the midst of an infinity of worlds that have preceded it and that will come after it. Between the world and God is an ascending order of creatures, more and more perfect, more and more free from matter, yet without

⁸⁷ *Principles*, IV, xiii.

⁸⁸ *Stromata*, I, v and xx; VI, xvii.

⁸⁹ St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, *Panegyric on Origen*, 13 f.

any being absolutely lacking a body, howsoever subtle. God exists as a descending order which, while maintaining the unity of nature between the Divine Persons, and even their consubstantiality,⁹⁰ graduates their plenitude and subordinates the activities of the Son and of the Holy Ghost to that of the Father. It must be confessed that Origen's language is clearly that of subordinationism. The only excuse that can be found for it is his desire to combat the Modalists, whom he always had in mind.

It is somewhat after the manner of Gnosticism that Origen tries to explain the relations of God with the world. Perhaps through consideration of this first question, Duchesne says that Origen's system, on matters in which the faith did not seem to him to be at stake, is "a sort of compromise between the Gospel and Gnosticism."⁹¹ On the second chief question of his treatise, the problem of evil, Origen so far departs from the Gnostic system that he takes the contrary attitude.

Whereas heretical Gnosticism explains the origin of evil by a fatal decadence of beings, Origen holds that all the degrees of good and evil, all the degrees of the being of creatures, are to be explained only by freedom. The object of the eternal creation was beings equal in faculties and gifts, but free. They have not all been equally faithful to God; hence the differences between them.⁹² Some became angels, others human beings, others devils. But the evil which free will made, free will can repair, not however by the mere powers of nature, but by the coöperation of man with God. About this coöperation the great scholar uses expressions of unsurpassed clearness and force.⁹³ The possibility of this coöperation is owing to the

⁹⁰ The word *ὁμοούσιος* is to be found in Origen, if he is rendered exactly in the Latin translation of one of his homilies on the Epistle to the Hebrews.

⁹¹ Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 259.

⁹² *Principles*, I, viii; II, ix; III, v.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, III, i, 22. Cf. III, i, 18.

Incarnation, by which Jesus Christ, true Son of God, became truly man, and thereby made Himself capable of expiating and redeeming the sins of men. This redemption is accomplished by His death and is perpetuated by the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist. Through these mysteries or Sacraments, Christ unites Himself to whosoever is willing to be united, grants His strength to whoever accepts it, communicates His divinity to whoever consents to receive it.

But the triumph of good over evil would not be worthy of God unless it were complete. Origen glimpses a regeneration of all creatures at the end of time, a sort of return to unity by a fusion of every created being in the Uncreated, a fusion that is not the absorption of God in man, nor of man in God, but one in which every creature, even a sinful one, gradually purified by the avenging fire, that is, by the fever of its remorse,⁹⁴ will at last enter into the friendship of God. Then death will be destroyed, the body will be spiritualized, the material world will be transformed, and everywhere there will be only peace and harmony in love.⁹⁵ Origen's book is a curious mixture of boldness and timidity; when he approaches the question of the consummation of all things, he hesitates and humbles himself. He says: "These subjects, indeed, are treated by us with great solicitude and caution, in the manner rather of an investigation and discussion, than in that of fixed and certain decision."⁹⁶ Yet we feel that, even if he dare not place his full assurance in this vision of the final regeneration, he puts his whole desire and his whole heart into it.

There was never anything artificial about Origen's enthusiasm. When repulsed at Alexandria, he was welcomed with favor by the bishops of Palestine, and at Caesarea he opened

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, II, x, 4.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, I, vi, 4; III, vi, 6.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, I, vi, 1.

a theological school that had a more marked scientific character than the Alexandrian School. Origen begins there by teaching dialectics; he then teaches physics, geometry, and astronomy, and after that takes up the subject of morals, which, as one of his hearers said, "seems to be incarnate in the teacher himself."⁹⁷ From morals he passes to metaphysics, reviews all the philosophical systems, and recommends the study of all the writers, save those who deny the existence of God and of Providence.⁹⁸ The master then saw flocking to Caesarea the most illustrious disciples, such as Gregory, the future Thaumaturgus, and his young brother. There he publishes his greatest works of exegesis and the gigantic monument of Biblical criticism known as the *Hexapla*. Its purpose is to make visible the exactness of the translation known as the Septuagint Version, and to supply a safe basis for the textual criticism of the Sacred Books. In six columns he places opposite the Hebrew text in Hebrew characters, the same text transliterated into Greek letters, the version of Aquila, that of Symmachus, that of the Septuagint, and that of Theodotion. His fame became universal. He was consulted from all sides; his writings spread in the West as in the East. Yet he withstood all the enemies of the Church: heretics, Jews, and pagans. For he loved the Church with a boundless love. "The Church alone," he said, "is in possession of the right faith"⁹⁹ . . . The true canon of the Scriptures is that alone which the Church guarantees.¹⁰⁰ . . . The formula of the true faith is that which is in the baptismal symbol.¹⁰¹ . . . The heretics have the name of Christians; but in reality they are robbers and adulterers: robbers who make off with the vessels of the

⁹⁷ St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, *op. cit.*, chaps. 7-15.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, bk. I, sec. 19.

¹⁰⁰ *Homily 1 on Luke*.

¹⁰¹ *Commentary on St. John's Gospel*, bk. 32, sec. 9.

temple, adulterers who stain the chaste dogmas of the Church.”¹⁰²

Origen's "Contra Celsum"

But the heretics were not the only enemies of the Church. The middle of the second century marks the starting point of a series of open attacks upon Christianity by the pagan philosophers, attacks that continued until Julian the Apostate. Scholars, such as Crescens and Fronto, assailed the Christian religion with the weapons of historical criticism and dialectics. Their writings were soon eclipsed by the work of the Platonist Celsus, whose *True Discourse* (about 178) is the most violent diatribe that pagan antiquity produced against the religion of Christ. Therein insult is heaped upon the Christians, their sacred books, their dogmas, their worship, their whole life. The Bible is made out to be a mass of silly fables; Christ and His disciples, as commonplace impostors: the rapid spread of Christianity, as the result of the panic caused by the terrors of the last judgment and the fire of hell; the organization of the Church, as the most dread peril that ever menaced the prosperity and security of the Empire. The work is skeptical and abusive, false to the point of flagrant lying, humorous to the point of low comedy; yet it betrays extensive knowledge, remarkable keenness, and consummate cleverness.¹⁰³ There was only one man capable of at once presenting a complete and victorious refutation of it—Origen. For a while he withstood the persistent entreaties of his friends, not through lack of courage, but because he was convinced that

¹⁰² "Casta Ecclesiae dogmata"; *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, bk. 5, sec. 1.

¹⁰³ Celsus' work is lost, but it can be almost entirely reconstructed, thanks to the method of his opponent, Origen, who refutes his teaching by quoting his exact words and following him step by step.

any human effort was powerless to reestablish destroyed or shaken faith in men's souls. He says: "If it were possible, indeed, for me to enter along with my words into the conscience of everyone without exception who peruses this work, and to extract each dart which wounds him who is not completely protected with the whole armor of God, and apply a rational medicine to cure the wound inflicted by Celsus . . . I would do so. . . . It is the work of God alone to take up His abode invisibly." ¹⁰⁴ Yet he decides to do so, "to refute the statements of Celsus and thus to prepare the way for the triumph of the truth." ¹⁰⁵

In the preface Origen declares what he conceives to be the true proof of Christianity, which is not a mental exercise, but which can make a man pass from unbelief to the faith, or strengthen a Christian in his belief. He declares: "I venture, then, to say that this 'apology,' which you require me to compose, will somewhat weaken that defense [of Christianity] which rests on facts, and that power of Jesus which is manifest to those who are not altogether devoid of perception." ¹⁰⁶ But what, in Origen's mind, is that "apology which rests on facts (τὴν ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν ἀπολογίαν)"? What, especially to his mind, shows the truth of Christianity is the moral power and the moral perfection of the Church. "There is not a single juggler," he says, "who by means of his proceedings invites his spectators to reform their morals." ¹⁰⁷ "Nor would the Christians, had they owed their origin to a rebellion, have adopted laws of so exceedingly mild a character as not to allow them, when it was their fate to be slain as sheep, on any occasion to resist their persecutors." ¹⁰⁸ And again he says: "Agreeably to the promise of Jesus, His disciples performed even greater

¹⁰⁴ *Against Celsus*, V, i.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, Pref., 4.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, Pref., 3.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, I, 68. Cf. II, 44; VIII, 43.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, III, 7.

works than these miracles of Jesus. . . . Many, too, who were lame in the feet of the inner man, as Scripture calls it, do not simply leap, but leap as the hart."¹⁰⁹ And he adds that the spread of Christianity and the persecution daily increases the power of the Christian faith.¹¹⁰ We might almost suppose we were listening to the words of the Vatican Council declaring that "the very Church herself, in view of her wonderful propagation, her eminent holiness, and her exhaustless fruitfulness in all that is good . . . offers a great and evident claim to belief, and an undeniable proof of her divine commission."¹¹¹

This, however, does not mean that the apologist makes little use of the other proofs: prophecies, miracles, and our Lord's explicit declarations. For Origen devotes to these proofs the major part of his book. But, since his aim is that of practical apologetics, he wishes first to bring before his reader the proof that he can best grasp, the moral miracle of the life of the Church.

Further, whatever proof is offered, it will be effective, says Origen, only for a soul that is well-disposed. "Respecting the whole history related in the Gospels concerning Jesus, there is need of candor in those who are to read, and of much investigation and, so to speak, of insight into the meaning of the writers."¹¹² But this is far from the prompting which inspired the work of Celsus. Celsus is not at any pains to understand the Scriptures;¹¹³ he consults nothing but his hatred;¹¹⁴ he parodies, he scoffs, he descends even to buffoonery,¹¹⁵ and thus, instead of throwing light on any-

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, II, 48.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Vatican Council, session III, chap. 3 (Denzinger, no. 1794).

¹¹² *Against Celsus*, I, 42.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, III, 74.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, II, 11.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, V, 18. Cf. II, 56; III, 21; IV, 13.

thing, he darkens everything; in place of rising, he sinks.¹¹⁶

None of Origen's works better reveals the depth of his apostolic soul; an apostle writes or speaks, not to gratify himself with vain notions, but to influence souls, to convert them to Christ, to save them.

Origen's Zeal

It is beyond question that the *Contra Celsum* contributed in large measure to the salvation of many souls. Yet the zealous apologist was not satisfied. To Christ he had given his labor and his tranquillity and, under especially painful circumstances, he had made sacrifices that were even more intimately personal; but he had not shed his blood for Christ. The longing of his childhood had not been realized. When a mere boy, he envied the lot of his father Leonides, who was put to death for the faith. Later on, in 235, at the beginning of the persecution of Maximinus, two of his friends, Ambrose and Protocetus, were cast into prison, and Origen wrote them his *Exhortation to Martyrdom*.

"Fifteen years later, the Decian persecution found him at his post of Christian teacher, and he was arrested, dragged to the rack, thrown into prison, and loaded with chains, and his limbs were wrenched asunder. He was threatened with the stake, and subjected to other tortures. Nothing daunted his courage. Nevertheless, less fortunate than his friend Alexander, who died in prison, Origen lived on. He survived the end of the persecution for two or three years, and found time to associate himself with Cornelius, Cyprian, and Dionysius, the great bishops of the day, in the merciful work of reconciling the apostates, whose faith had failed in the days of trial. His friend Ambrose died before him. A letter on martyrdom from his old disciple Dionysius, then bishop of Alexandria, was one of the last that he received. At last he died, crowned with all the honors a Christian may aspire

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*, VII, 46.

to in this world, and poor to the very last. It was at Tyre that he gave up his beautiful soul to God.”¹¹⁷

He left behind an immense work¹¹⁸ that aroused more discussion after his death than during his life. St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, Pamphilus, and Eusebius of Caesarea vigorously defended him. Others bitterly accused him of having favored the heretical tendencies of his contemporaries by teaching the eternity of creation, the materiality of the angels, the subordination of the Son and the Holy Ghost to the Father, by giving too large a place to allegory in the Scriptures, by favoring belief in the preëxistence of souls, by insinuating the expectation of a final restoration of all things in God, a restoration that will be shared by the damned and even the devils. These are the errors for which, more or less justly, Origen has been blamed. It is hard to say exactly how far they should be attributed to him. His writings were falsified even while he was living; Origen complains of this sadly.¹¹⁹ If there are gaps and errors in the very numerous subjects which this great man broached, often for the first time, beyond the path marked out by tradition, his work as a whole has never been attacked by anyone and merits our admiration. With Origen, Catholic theology, roughly hewn by St. Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria, is penetrated with a generous breath of true science and true criticism. His upright intentions, devotion to the Church, and ceaseless labor, and that longing for sacrifice which animated him to his last day, make him a model for anyone with the ambition of devoting his life to the defense of his faith.

St. Hippolytus

While Catholic science was making so great progress in the

¹¹⁷ Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 253.

¹¹⁸ Six thousand volumes, according to St. Epiphanius. “This enormous number is not improbable, if we consider the peculiarities of an ancient library, and the small size of the rolls (*volumina*) written on.” (Duchesne, *op. cit.*, I, 255.)

¹¹⁹ Freppel, *Origène*, II, 445; Duchesne, *op. cit.*, I, 260.

East, it appeared in the West in works that were less brilliant, but firmer and clearer. St. Hippolytus must be regarded as the principal representative of this movement. His commentaries on the Scripture are rightly preferred to those of Origen, if not for depth and originality of thought, at least for the soundness of the principles inspiring them, for the soberness of the views, for the tactfulness and good taste that guide his interpretations and practical applications. St. Jerome enumerates the great exegetical works of St. Hippolytus; but only fragments of them are extant.¹²⁰

St. Hippolytus' chief work is the *Refutation of All Heresies*, better known as the *Philosophumena*.¹²¹ It was discovered on Mount Athos in 1842 and published for the first time at Oxford in 1851.¹²² It probably appeared about the year 230. From the preface we learn that the author's purpose is "to show whence the heretics derive their doctrines. They come from pagan wisdom, philosophic doctrines, deceitful mysteries, and the stories of wandering astrologers." Here we no longer have the fine confidence of Justin, Clement, and Origen in philosophy, "the gift of God to the Greek genius." Hippolytus, more of a lawyer than a metaphysician, is Roman in character as well as by birth, although he writes in Greek; he is distrustful of obscure speculation and its dangers; on the other hand, he carries his taste for precision to extremes. If he

¹²⁰ St. Jerome, *De viris illustribus*, 61; *Commentary on Matthew*, Prologue. The most complete work on St. Hippolytus is d'Alès, *La Théologie de saint Hippolyte*.

¹²¹ Attempts have been made to prove that the *Philosophumena* was not written by St. Hippolytus. It has been variously attributed to Origen, Caius, Tertullian, Novatian, or some member of his school. A. d'Alès, having examined all the arguments advanced for these different opinions, concludes, in agreement with Funk, that "the attribution of the work to St. Hippolytus is as certain as any fact can be that still lacks direct attestation." (D'Alès, *op. cit.*, pp. xxxv-xliii.)

¹²² Duncker-Schneidewin, *Refutatio omnium haeresium*. (See Bardenhewer, *Patrology*, pp. 208 ff.) The first book of this work was already known and attributed to Origen. The Codex discovered in 1842 contains books 4-10. We still lack books 2 and 3.

thinks that a man is evasive or through prudence or cleverness weighs the pros and cons, Hippolytus makes such a one, even though he be pope, the object of his strongest invectives and his sturdiest opposition.

The *Philosophumena* relates two disputes in which Hippolytus even caused a schism by his resistance to popes whom he judged had yielded to error. His heroic martyrdom and humble retraction no doubt blotted out this fault before God; and, as we shall see, attenuating circumstances must have considerably lessened its gravity. The historical facts are beyond cavil.¹²³

The first controversy in which Hippolytus engaged was the Trinitarian dispute. Its origin involves the teaching of very early Fathers. When a Jew or a pagan was admitted to the Church, his baptismal initiation was made in the name of the Trinity. He was told: You have heretofore worshipped the one only God adored by your patriarchs, your prophets, or your philosophers. But your faith was incomplete. Henceforth you will adore the Son of God, whom you are going to receive in the "breaking of bread," and the Spirit of God, who will make you a perfect Christian. The three sacred names, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were thus at the very beginning the distinctive sign of the Christian faith. The first Christians not only adored the Father as Creator, the Son as Redeemer, and the Spirit as Sanctifier, but also loved them "with their whole

¹²³ "In the entire history of the Church few events are so strange as the schism of St. Hippolytus. An eminent member of the Roman clergy, continuing to be an antipope until shortly before his death; opposed to him, the legitimate pope, St. Callistus, who was an object of attack during his life and was vilified after his death: this was a situation more rare than it was edifying. . . . We cannot expect to clear up all the points in the question, by means of a unique and evidently partial document, the *Philosophumena*. . . . How far Hippolytus was mistaken as to the import of his claims and whether he was convinced that his adversary had fallen from orthodoxy and was not fit to exercise apostolic authority, must remain a mystery. . . . But when he became a victim of persecution and was face to face with death, Hippolytus recovered and again became a good churchman." (D'Alès, *La Théologie de saint Hippolyte*, pp. 1, 211, 213.)

heart, and their whole soul, and with all their strength." Since, even before Tertullian used the word "person" to distinguish the three divine terms of the Trinity, the intimate love was a relationship of a personal sort; the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost were, to Christians of the first centuries, subsisting individualities.

The Fathers of the Church were watchful that the doctrine of the divine oneness did not suffer from this threefold adoration. It is noteworthy how insistently St. Justin, Theophilus of Antioch, St. Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen keep repeating that it is the Word that was revealed to men in the divine apparitions of the Old Testament. They employed this argument to show the Jews that Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, is none other than the "angel of Israel," so often manifested to their fathers. This same argument they use to convince the pagans that Christianity is not a new religion, but that it is connected with the birth of mankind. And, in fine, they employ it also against the Gnostics, when proving that the same God is the author of the two Testaments.¹²⁴

For a long time these general dogmatic affirmations were sufficient. But as philosophical speculation entered into the Christian world, men's minds became engaged in the explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Two extremes were possible: to exaggerate the unity or to over-emphasize the trinity. And in fact these two excesses appeared toward the end of the second century. One was the error of a wealthy tanner of Byzantium, named Theodotus; the other, of a Christian of Asia, named Praxeas, about whose personal history we know nothing.

Theodotus was a well-educated and scholarly Christian. Having had the misfortune to apostatize during a persecu-

¹²⁴ Genoulhac, in his *Histoire du dogme catholique*, bk. 12, chap. 1, has gathered together a large number of texts on this point.

tion, he came to Rome in the time of Pope Victor, there to hide his shame. When recognized by some of the brethren, he alleged in self-justification that, in denying Christ, he had not, after all, denied God, but only a man. Calling to his aid his abundant erudition and persuasive eloquence, he strove to prove his doctrine by Scripture texts and by reason. According to him the teaching of the Gospel amounts to this: A very religious man, Jesus, born of a virgin, received on the day of his Baptism an outpouring of divine graces which made him capable of fulfilling the mission of Messiah. But this outpouring of grace did not make him God. He merely became the adopted son of God. Some of Theodotus' followers, however, maintained that Jesus became divinized after his resurrection. About 190, Pope Victor excommunicated Theodotus. The latter resisted and, in the midst of scholarly men, organized a sort of Church, or rather a school of philosophy, with himself at the head, which concerned itself more with Aristotle and Plato than with the teaching of the Church. A second Theodotus, called the Banker, to distinguish him from the Tanner, gave a religious color to the sect by adding to its founder's theories about Jesus certain odd speculations about Melchisedech. By a private interpretation of a passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews,¹²⁵ he called Melchisedech the Son of God and identified him with the Spirit that descended upon Jesus on the day of His Baptism. About 234, one Artemon revived the schism by claiming that the doctrine of Theodotus had been the doctrine of the Church until the time of Pope Zephyrinus, who altered the tradition.

This heresy seems to have had no importance beyond what it owed to the talents, intrigues, and social influence of its chiefs. An attack upon so well-established a dogma could not disturb the faithful very greatly. It met a ruthless opponent in Hippolytus, who placed his vigorous talent and consummate

¹²⁵ Heb. 7:3.

erudition at the service of tradition and of the Holy See.

But an opposite error had already started. In connection with the Montanist dispute we mentioned a mysterious person known by the name of Praxeas.¹²⁶ He came to Rome to enlighten Pope Zephyrinus as to the real character of the sect, and particularly as to the excesses which the cult of the Paraclete gave rise to. Praxeas made so little account of the Holy Ghost that he absorbed His personality as well as that of the Son in the divine Personality. In other words, he revived the Modalist error, which considered the three Persons of the Trinity as modes or aspects of one Substance. Those holding this opinion were wont to call themselves Monarchians, because, they said, they desired to maintain the monarchy in the government of the world. Their opponents ironically gave them the name of *Patripassians*, because it logically followed from their theory that the Father had been crucified with the Son on Calvary. Tertullian, who never forgave Praxeas for having contributed to the condemnation of the Montanists, said of him: "Praxeas did a twofold service for the devil at Rome: he put the Paraclete to flight, and he crucified the Father."¹²⁷

Pope Zephyrinus, after receiving such useful information from Praxeas, seems to have testified his kindness towards him, but in his friendliness perhaps closed his eyes for a

¹²⁶ So vague is all information regarding Praxeas, that De Rossi and Hagemann doubt whether he should not be identified with Epigonus or Callistus. De Rossi's conjecture, identifying Praxeas with Epigonus, is maintained in the *Bullett. di archeol. crist.*, 1886, pp. 1 ff., 17 ff. Gerhard Esser, in his learned monograph, *Wer war Praxeas?*, discusses the question. The historical problem is a curious one. Tertullian not only attributed to Praxeas the introduction of "Patripassian Monarchianism," but also wrote an entire treatise against him. Hippolytus, who was well situated to become acquainted with the Patripassian heresy, since he fought against it personally at Rome, says not a single word about Praxeas; he speaks of Noetus and the latter's disciple, Epigonus (*Refutation of all Heresies*, IX, 2). It seems impossible to decide whether or not "Praxeas" is merely a fictitious name.

¹²⁷ *Against Praxeas*, I.

time to Praxeas' doctrine, which appears, moreover, to have been spread by him only by way of gradually advancing insinuations.¹²⁸ Hippolytus expressly charges Zephyrinus with having favored heresy by permitting the new doctors to be heard. In fact, many of Praxeas' followers quickly spread his teaching. Noetus preached it at Smyrna, Epigonus brought it to Rome. Finally Sabellius became its chief protagonist. As Tertullian says: "Soon you hear nothing but people talking about monarchy."¹²⁹ The Monarchians' tactics were to present themselves as the opponents of the Theodotian heresy. Perhaps a consideration of the real services which they rendered the Church in fighting the heresy was the chief reason why the Pope did not proceed at once with rigor. The simple and upright man who was at the head of the Church merely affirmed the traditional truths. He said: "I know that there is one God, Jesus Christ; nor except Him do I know any other that is begotten and amenable to suffering. . . . The Father did not die, but the Son." We have this remark from Hippolytus himself.¹³⁰ From these statements, the author of the *Philosophumena* concludes that Zephyrinus really professed the doctrine of the new teachers, even while wishing to have it appear that he was disowning it. With open derision the Pope was called ignorant. It is likely that Zephyrinus was a stranger to philosophical studies. Perhaps it was well that he was so and that, while speculative theories were clashing with each other, a pontiff who knew only tradition, which was in his keeping, merely repeated the statement of that tradition, "keeping a firm hold on the two ends of the chain, though not always seeing the middle where the chain continues,"¹³¹ and leaving the trial of the systems to the future.

¹²⁸ Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 225.

¹²⁹ *Against Praxeas*, 3.

¹³⁰ *Philosophumena*, IX, 6.

¹³¹ Bossuet, *Libre arbitre*, chap. 4.

The Question of Penance

The man on whom Hippolytus heaped his mightiest maledictions was not Pope Zephyrinus, but his friend and adviser, Callistus. When, at Zephyrinus' death, the clergy chose Callistus in his place, Hippolytus refused to recognize him and allowed a schismatical party to confer the government of the Church of Rome on himself.

His opposition to Callistus was bitter and relentless. The new Pope, at the outset of his pontificate, condemned Sabelius. But Hippolytus accused him of not being sincere, of issuing his condemnation as a political move, and of personally sustaining a scarcely attenuated Monarchianism.¹³² What are we to think of these charges? The sole authority for them is the *Philosophumena*. "It is quite strange that Tertullian, who disliked Callistus and who addresses him with many reproaches, does not charge him with such a misdeed. The witness of the author of the *Philosophumena* is isolated and, moreover, is that of a personal enemy. Until further historical researches are made, Callistus must at present, to judge exclusively by the facts, be regarded as orthodox."¹³³

In another grievance against this Pope, Tertullian's violent opposition joined that of Hippolytus. We have already noted that several churches, while not denying God's power to forgive all sins without exception, refused canonical absolution to three categories of sinners: apostates, adulterers, and murderers. In other words, the excommunication of those who had committed any of these three sins was perpetual.¹³⁴ In Callistus' time this rigorism had become general.¹³⁵ For Chris-

¹³² A description of this moderate Monarchianism will be found in Duchesne, *Origines chrétiennes*, p. 316, and Tixeront, *History of Dogmas*, I, 291 f.

¹³³ Tixeront, *op. cit.*, I, 297; d'Alès, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-35.

¹³⁴ Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 230.

¹³⁵ This fact is evidenced in the *Philosophumena*, vi, 41, and Clement's *Stromata*, II, 13.

tians who fell into one of these sins, the situation was very painful and usually did not promote the correction of the sinner. Condemned to the status of "penitents" for their whole life, without the prospect of ever returning to the communion of the Church, many lost courage, and forsook a penance that seemed to them to fail of its purpose.

Callistus thought to remedy this state of affairs. By a decree which we know only from Hippolytus and Tertullian, he ordained that henceforth fornicators and adulterers should be subjected to a merely temporary penance and that, after it had been performed, they could be absolved like ordinary sinners and received back into the communion of the faithful.¹³⁶ This rule was supplemented by certain minor prescriptions conceived in the same spirit.¹³⁷ Tertullian and Hippolytus cried "scandal!" Tertullian says: "I hear that there has even been an edict set forth, and a peremptory one, too. The Sovereign Pontiff—that is, the bishop of bishops—issues an edict: 'I remit, to such as have discharged the requirements of repentance, the sins both of adultery and of fornication.' . . . And where shall this liberality be posted up? On the very spot, I suppose, on the very gates of the sensual appetites. . . . The Church, the true, the modest, has none to whom to make such a promise; and if she have had, she does not make it."¹³⁸ Hippolytus' diatribe is not so violent; but it is no less bitter. Even after the death of Callistus, under Popes Urban and Pontianus, Hippolytus continued to hold the title of bishop of Rome, and consequently of head of the Church. The conflict ended only when Maximinus issued his decree of persecution. Pontianus, the legitimate pope, and Hippolytus, the antipope, were arrested at the same time and sentenced to the mines of Sardinia. In prison they became recon-

¹³⁶ Tertullian, *Modesty*, 18.

¹³⁷ See Tixeront, *op. cit.*, I, 343 ff.

¹³⁸ Tertullian, *op. cit.*, 1.

ciled to each other, or rather Hippolytus, before his death, renounced the schism and counseled all his followers to rally to the Church.¹³⁹

A fine monumental statue of white marble, erected at Rome in honor of St. Hippolytus, was discovered in some excavations in 1551. On it are engraved the titles of several of his writings. The object of many of these was the defense of sound doctrine. He fought the Theodotians, and also the Alogi and the Marcionites. That the Christians might not be dependent upon Jewish calculations in the matter of the date of Easter, he drew up Easter tables based on a cycle of eight years. His last work was probably the *Chronicles*, only fragments of which remain. The schism that he provoked did not survive him. His name is not found in the episcopal lists of Rome, and the *Liber Pontificalis* calls him simply "a Roman priest."¹⁴⁰

The Persecution under Maximinus

Besides St. Pontianus and St. Hippolytus there were other illustrious victims of the persecution of Maximinus. To their names we can add that of Ambrose, Origen's closest friend, that of Pontianus' successor, Anterus, and perhaps also that of St. Barbara. This persecution lasted only three years; it began and ended with the reign of Maximinus. And it was only local.¹⁴¹ In some places it was furious, in others mild, and in many places there was no persecution at all; compared with other persecutions, it claimed but few victims. Maximinus of Thrace, a brutal, coarse soldier, after having his predecessor, Alexander Severus, assassinated, was made emperor by the acclaim of the army. He had scarcely any idea what

¹³⁹ This is attested by a metrical inscription of Pope St. Damasus, which was found and partially restored by De Rossi.

¹⁴⁰ See A. d'Alès, *La Théologie de saint Hippolyte*.

¹⁴¹ Letter of Firmilian to St. Cyprian, in *Letters of St. Cyprian*, LXXV.

Christianity might be. This former wrestler, of Herculean stature, who drank an amphora of wine in a single day and crushed a horse's jawbone with a blow of his fist,¹⁴² had no intellectual or religious concern of any kind. He persecuted the Christians because Alexander had favored them. As Eusebius says,¹⁴³ this was the whole secret of his policy toward the Church.

Although Maximinus was simple and boorish, he had all the cunning of his rustic ancestors. Shrewdly he "commanded at first only the heads of the churches to be slain, as the abettors and agents of evangelical truth."¹⁴⁴ This is how Pontianus and Hippolytus, pope and antipope, were arrested early in his reign and banished to Sardinia. Origen also was a leader. Did the crowned barbarian misunderstand the influence of that great man? Or did Origen's immense popularity make him hesitate? Or, through a refinement of cunning, did he plan to accomplish his purpose by striking the one who, being Origen's disciple, friend, and Maecenas, had been the instigator of all his works? In any event, after Pontianus and Hippolytus, one of the principal persons arrested by the Emperor's orders was Ambrose, who had placed his influence and fortune at the service of the head of the Alexandrian School.

We have no information as to Ambrose's occupation before he was connected with Origen. "We know merely that he appeared with luster at the court of Severus or Caracalla, since Origen relates that he had made solemn entries into many cities. After withdrawing to Alexandria, he lived there surrounded by a large and flourishing family. His wife, Marcella, was a Christian. He had brothers and sisters and several children. Ambrose, perhaps yielding to the gentle in-

¹⁴² Capitolinus, 1-3; Herodianus, *Historiae*, 7.

¹⁴³ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, xxviii.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

fluences surrounding him, gave up paganism, but did not accept Christian truth without difficulty. Gnosticism, so brilliant at Alexandria, first beguiled his inquiring and subtle mind. But, as in the case of many others, Valentinus' error served him as a transition from paganism to Christianity. About 212, Ambrose embraced the orthodox faith. The instrument of his conversion was Origen. From that time he was passionately devoted to Origen and supplied him with books and copyists. And he spurred him on, questioning him insistently, unceasingly making that great mind gleam with its sparkling genius. Most of Origen's Scripture commentaries are due to Ambrose's generosity, and perhaps even more to his importunity."¹⁴⁵

Ambrose was arrested with a priest of Caesarea, named Protocetus, and a number of other Christians. His property was seized either by virtue of a legal confiscation or in consequence of illegal violence or disturbance. The Emperor had ordered that the Christians named by his informers be brought to him where he was encamped on the bank of the Rhine. Ambrose and his companions were placed in a wagon and sent off toward Germany. There, stripped of every title or office, they were to be exiled or sentenced to death. But they were spared a martyr's death.¹⁴⁶ There is reason to suppose they were set at liberty by the governor of some of the provinces through which they passed. Maximinus' reign was constantly disturbed by the conspiracies of his rivals, who tried to alienate from him the officials of the Empire. One of these officials, by freeing the Emperor's prisoners, would, so to speak, be pledging himself to the Emperor's rivals. We find Ambrose still living at the close of Philip's reign, about 248.

The Roman government was more watchful in the case of

¹⁴⁵ Allard, *Histoire des pers.*, II, 204 f.

¹⁴⁶ In the early centuries the title of martyr was not limited to those who died for the faith. It was given also to those who had suffered great tortures for the same cause.

Pontianus' successor, Anterus. The *Chronicle* of Hippolytus, quoted by the Philocalian Calendar, relates that Pontianus, having reached Sardinia, resigned his office, and Anterus was ordained in his place.¹⁴⁷ As to the reason for this strange resignation and for his being so quickly replaced, Allard supposes that "the recent adoption by the Roman Church of the corporate form as a basis of its relations with the government, and the growing importance of material interests entrusted to the head of the community, moved Pontianus to take the step he did; he wished that, in the crisis which was about to disturb the peace, the State would find a responsible administrator to deal with, a chief able to speak and treat in the name of his brethren."¹⁴⁸ Pontianus lived but a short time after his resignation. Anterus died at Rome even before his predecessor's martyrdom. The *Liber Pontificalis* says that the pontiff was put to death "for having carefully sought the Acts of the martyrs in the court records and for having hidden them in his church."¹⁴⁹ He was buried in the papal crypt in the cemetery of St. Callistus. The marble slab closing his tomb and marked with his name (*Anteros episcopos*) was found by De Rossi.¹⁵⁰

St. Barbara was probably martyred under Maximinus at Nicomedia. The Acts of her martyrdom are of an early date.¹⁵¹

Maximinus' reign ended in a scene of murder similar to

¹⁴⁷ Document cited by De Smedt, *Introductio generalis ad historiam ecclesiae*, p. 511.

¹⁴⁸ Allard, *op. cit.*, II, 196.

¹⁴⁹ Duchesne, *Lib. pont.*, p. ci; cf. Tillemont, *Mémoires*, III, note II on St. Anterus.

¹⁵⁰ De Rossi, *Roma sotterranea*, II, 56, and plate 3. St. Anterus was a Greek. During his brief pontificate he began a collection of the Acts of the martyrs. He was supposed to have issued a decretal permitting the transfer of bishops from one see to another. But this document is apocryphal. (Cf. Duchesne, *Lib. pont.*, I, xcvi, c, 147; Jaffé, *Regesta pontificum*, I, 15.)

¹⁵¹ See Tillemont, *Mémoires*, vol. III, note I on the persecution of Maximinus.

that which began it. One day in March, 238, while the Emperor was asleep in his tent before Aquileia, the pretorians rushed upon him to slay him. He was awakened by the noise and, so it is said, anticipated their outrage by committing suicide.

His two immediate successors, Pupienus and Balbinus, reigned only a few months. Under them and under Gordian III, who followed them, the Christians were not molested by the imperial magistrates. The Acts of the martyrs mention, in his reign, only the torture of the slave Sabina by her pagan mistress, because she refused to abjure the Christian religion. When the "brethren" learned that she had been consigned by her cruel mistress to a dungeon in the mountains, her feet in chains, condemned to hard labor, almost dying of fatigue and hunger, a distressing case of conscience was offered them for solution. The Christian law, howsoever favorable to the freeing of slaves, had always regarded a slave's escape as a violation of property rights. Tertullian said: "Such an act would be contrary to justice, to equity, and to honesty."¹⁵² But might an abuse of power, such as this case presented, a violation of the first principles of natural law, justify an exception to the general rule? Their conscience decided that it did. Some fearless Christians succeeded in liberating the heroic slave; they changed her name to Theodota, which she used thereafter to evade her inhuman mistress' attempts to find her.¹⁵³

Philip the Arabian (244-249)

The successor of Gordian III was Philip, the son of an Arab bandit. He had made his way into the Roman army, and, like Maximinus and Gordian, obtained the imperial office through a military uprising and the murder of his predecessor.

¹⁵² Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, I, 23.

¹⁵³ *Acta sanctorum*, February, I, 44.

But this criminal upstart, who was born near Palestine in a district peopled by Christians, had early been initiated into the Christian faith.¹⁵⁴ While a mere boy, he shared in the trials of the Church and was persecuted under Maximinus; then he shared in the rejoicing of his brethren when the tyrant's fall restored peace and freedom to them.

The Christians were glad to see on the imperial throne a man who had received Baptism and never disavowed it. But the Church could not withhold her condemnation of the crime by which he came to power. During his journey to Rome to be invested with the imperial insignia, his stop in the city of Antioch was marked by an incident which is related by Eusebius, St. John Chrysostom, and the *Chronicle of Alexander*.¹⁵⁵ It was about the middle of April, 244.¹⁵⁶ The Christians of Antioch, gathered together at night, were celebrating the vigil of Easter. The holy Bishop Babylas, who later bravely gave his life for the faith, presided over the meeting. Philip, accompanied by his wife Otacilia Severa, who was also a Christian, advanced to take a place in the midst of the faithful. But the bishop recognized him. Coming up to the Emperor and placing his hand on Philip's breast, he said: "You have committed a murder; the Church can receive you only to the ranks of penitents."

"He then," says St. Chrysostom, "drove the sovereign from the church, with no more trouble than a shepherd has in driving out a sick sheep from his sheepfold."¹⁵⁷ The guilty Emperor obeyed and humbly took his place at the rear of the

¹⁵⁴ That Philip was a Christian is plainly stated by Eusebius (*H.E.*, VI, xxxiv), Vincent of Lerins (*Against the Heretics*, 23), Orosius (*Historiae adversum paganos*, bk. 7, chap. 20), and Dionysius of Alexandria, in Eusebius (VII, xix).

¹⁵⁵ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, xxxiv; St. John Chrysostom, *De sancto Babyla*, vi; *Chron. Alex.* (ed. 1615), p. 630.

¹⁵⁶ Tillemont, *Histoire des empereurs*, III, 302.

¹⁵⁷ St. John Chrysostom, *loc. cit.*

church among those who, in lowly attitude, awaited the pardon of their sins.¹⁵⁸

Philip the Arabian was not a model Christian, but he was sincere. He marked his reign by several humane measures. He abolished that publicity of vice which had long been the scandal of the pagan world.¹⁵⁹ In 248, at the millennial of the founding of Rome, he granted a general amnesty, which permitted the return of exiled or deported Christians.¹⁶⁰ The disfavor which he showed toward idolatrous associations may be responsible for the fall of the Arval Brethren. All preceding emperors had held it an honor to belong to this association;¹⁶¹ but Philip, who had been raised to the throne by the accident of chance, was not rooted in the Roman world; even if he thought of depriving paganism of its position of State religion, he did not have the power to do so. "Even the Christians did not ask him to do this. All they demanded of the State was the right to exist, a right accorded them by Alexander Severus. '*Christianos esse passus est*,' says Lampridius.¹⁶² Philip granted it to them even more generously."¹⁶³ Moreover, the representatives of Christianity seem to have had free access to him.¹⁶⁴ Eusebius speaks of letters written by Origen to Philip and to the Empress Severa. St. Jerome and St. Vincent of Lerins had these letters in their hands. St.

¹⁵⁸ Champagny, *Les Césars du III^e siècle*, II, 211; Allard, *op. cit.*, pp. 224 ff. Duruy (*History of Rome*, VII, 173, note) questions the authenticity of this account, for no reason except that it is too much like the story of St. Ambrose stopping Theodosius at the threshold of the church. That the event is substantially true, is held by Aubé, *Les Chrétiens dans l'empire romain*, p. 471, and by Renan, *Marc-Aurèle*, p. 586, note.

¹⁵⁹ Champagny, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

¹⁶⁰ Justinian Code, IX, xi, 7.

¹⁶¹ *Bullett. di archeol. crist.*, 1869, p. 14.

¹⁶² Lampridius, *Vita Alexandri*, 22.

¹⁶³ Allard, *op. cit.*, II, 236.

¹⁶⁴ This is the sum total of the truth contained in the *Acta sancti Pontii*. The legendary accounts in these Acts are criticized by Petau, *De doct. temp.*, bk. 2, chap. 25, and Tillemont, *Mémoires*, vol. V, note 7 on Valerian. Cf. *Acta sanctorum*, May, II, 274-279.

Vincent says that Origen in his letters speaks to the Emperor with "the doctrinal authority of the Church."¹⁶⁵

In its outward organization, its geographical expansion, its penetration into society, and the development of ecclesiastical science, the Church made notable progress in the reign of Emperor Philip.

Pope St. Fabian (236-250)

On January 10, 236, St. Anterus was succeeded by Pope Fabian. According to Eusebius, his election was miraculous: the descent of a dove upon Fabian's head in sight of the electors marked him out for their unanimous choice, though he was a simple layman, had but recently come to Rome, and was almost unknown there.¹⁶⁶ He ruled until 250, when he became one of the first victims of the persecution of Decius. What we know of him indicates that he was an eminent administrator. He regulated the parish administration and to some extent established the plan of a Christian Rome, dividing the city districts among the seven deacons and instituting seven subdeacons to collaborate with the seven ecclesiastical notaries in editing the authentic Acts of the martyrs.¹⁶⁷

Church Property

In Fabian's pontificate, thanks to the temporary peace which the Church enjoyed, ecclesiastical property became

¹⁶⁵ "*Christiani magisterii auctoritate.*" (*Commonitory*, chap. 17.)

¹⁶⁶ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, xxix.

¹⁶⁷ *Lib. pont.*, I, 149. Pseudo-Isidore, Gratian, and later canonists credit Fabian with various apocryphal regulations regarding ecclesiastical procedure, matrimony, the Eucharist, ordinations, etc. (Jaffé, *Regesta*, I, nos. 236-250.) According to the statement of St. Gregory of Tours, the first evangelization of France was due to St. Fabian, who, we are told, sent Gratian to Tours, Trophimus to Arles, Paul to Narbonne, Saturninus to Toulouse, Dionysius to Paris, Austremonius to Clermont, and Martial to Limoges. But it has been known for a long time that this account contains historical inaccuracies. The Church of Arles, for instance, certainly existed before the year 250. (See Duchesne, *Fastes épiscopaux*, I, 47, and Harnack, *Expansion of Christianity*, II, 264.)

organized, Christian propaganda spread afar and entered more and more into the upper classes of Roman society, and religious studies developed under the impulse of illustrious teachers.

The study of the way Church property was constituted at this period deserves special attention. One of Pope Fabian's first acts was to seek in Sardinia the body of his predecessor, St. Pontianus, that he might give it honorable burial, as he did the body of St. Anterus, in the papal cemetery of St. Callistus.¹⁶⁸ Such an event is significant. This journey, made openly by the Pope and his clergy, must have received the Emperor's authorization; Roman law was explicit in such cases.¹⁶⁹ But this authorization was an official confirmation of the rights of the Christians, especially of the bishop of Rome, to the cemetery of St. Callistus.¹⁷⁰ A passage in the *Philosophumena* seems to indicate that, in the time of Pope Zephyrinus, this cemetery was, so to speak, the headquarters of the Church of Rome (*domus Ecclesiae*).¹⁷¹ A special crypt was provided there for the burial of the Roman pontiffs. In the time of Philip, the underground vaulting was decorated with paintings, and over the catacomb rose a church or sanctuary that was plainly visible. In the middle of the third century other catacombs were still private property; but it cannot be denied that the cemetery of St. Callistus was corporate property and belonged to the Church represented by the bishop of Rome.

The same must have been true of several other cemeteries. Must we extend this legal status and suppose that other property besides cemeteries possessed this quality of collective ownership? The importance which imperial rescripts attribute

¹⁶⁸ *Lib. pont.*, vol. I.

¹⁶⁹ *Digest*, XLVIII, xxiv, 2.

¹⁷⁰ De Rossi, *Roma sotterranea*, II, 77.

¹⁷¹ *Philosophumena*, ix, 7.

to Church properties, the general terms used in speaking of them, and the general attitude of the Christians in the administration of these possessions, lead us to suppose so with a likelihood that is almost certainty. When Decius resumed the persecution of the Christians, one of his first acts was to seize these places of worship and to set guards at their entrances. Gallienus, when giving peace to the Church, declared that he restored the ecclesiastical property to the representatives of the Church. The practice of Christians in the middle of the third century of building oratories in plain sight over the catacombs, and the calmness with which Gregory Thaumaturgus erected the big church at Neocaesarea, indicate a security of people who consider they are acting in accord with legal prescriptions.

A point quite beyond doubt is that all these properties were administered by the hierarchical authorities of each church, at the head of which was the bishop. When the attention of the government was drawn to them, this was not so much because of their material value as because of the fact of their being administered by the churches. In each city the Christian community, with the bishop at its head, the various ranks of the clergy, its tribunals, its treasury, and its charitable works, formed a sort of little city of its own. In the middle of the third century, according to St. Cyprian, Decius would have preferred to see a competitor at Rome rather than a bishop.¹⁷² This importance was so much the greater since all the local Churches fraternized together and, through councils, correspondence, and interchange of alms, formed a single large body, the "great Church," as Celsus calls it, with the bishop of Rome as its undisputed head, for he and he alone is the one appealed to from all sides as arbiter in the disputes of individual churches and as the guarantor of unity against the claims of heresy.

¹⁷² St. Cyprian, *Letters*, 55.

There is no doubt about the fact of a civic organization of the Church, based on solidly established Church properties, in the middle of the third century. But difficulties confront us when we try to ascertain more exactly the legal character of these properties and the manner of their administration by the heads of the local churches.

The first two legal forms of Church property seem to have been individual ownership and corporate ownership through the forming of legally authorized societies. The first Christian meetings were held in the houses of some of the brethren, and the first Christian cemeteries were merely the burial places of some patricians converted to Christianity. When the Church had possessions of her own, these were sometimes placed under the names of individuals. But this arrangement could only be temporary: there was too much risk in the possible apostasy of the nominal owner, or in his simple whim or that of his heirs. Presently that method was abandoned. The enactments of Septimius Severus about burial associations must have supplied the Christians with a legal means of forming patrimonies. The churches which, in Trajan's reign, made use of all sorts of stratagems to hide their organized life from the authorities,¹⁷³ must have been eager to take advantage of the legal form which the new rescript offered them. As we said above,¹⁷⁴ this legal procedure would be an effective safeguard only if the government was unaware, or was thought to be unaware, of the existence of a bond between the various burial associations and a higher society embracing them all. This ignorance and this pretence of ignorance were possible in the second century, but became less and less so in the course of the third. It may be that, during the long intervals of peace which the Christians enjoyed

¹⁷³ Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 277.

¹⁷⁴ See *supra*, p. 296, note 59.

during the first half of the third century, the friendly emperors openly tolerated or recognized, though tacitly and without any decree or rescript to that effect, the right of the churches to possess landed property under the title of being religious societies. "To tolerate the Christians meant to tolerate the Christian body; to persecute the Christians meant to persecute the collective entity they necessarily formed. . . . When Gallienus wrote to the bishops to come and claim their churches, when Aurelian evicted Paul of Samosata from the church of Antioch, the Christians must certainly have been tempted to consider themselves authorized, both as individuals and as a body."¹⁷⁵ This conviction must have become firmly established under Philip.

The Spread of Christianity

Philip's rule was also very favorable to the geographic extension of Christianity. Origen, in his *Contra Celsus*, states that nearly the whole known Roman world was evangelized. Among the nations to whom the gospel was preached, he cites the following: some Breton and German tribes, Dacians, Sarmatians, and Scythians in Europe; a part of Ethiopia in Africa; the Seres, Hindus or Chinese in Asia.¹⁷⁶ Under Philip, Christianity developed so extensively in the provinces near the Black Sea that medals were struck there having the Emperor's image on one side, and on the other a religious subject.¹⁷⁷ In this same period a portion of Pontus, which had previously opposed Christianity, was converted with marvelous rapidity. St. Gregory of Nyssa relates that when St. Gregory Thaumaturgus as bishop entered Neocaesarea, one of the large cities of the district, he found about

¹⁷⁵ Duchesne, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

¹⁷⁶ Origen, *Against Celsus*, II.

¹⁷⁷ Lenormand, *Mélanges d'archéologie*, III, 199.

seventeen Christians there; a few years later, the same city counted scarcely that number of pagans.¹⁷⁸

Several concurring indications incline us to believe that in the time of Emperor Philip Christianity had at length entered the highest ranks of officialdom, which previously had been closed to it because of the acts of idolatry that were required of imperial officers. The Acts of St. Calocerus and St. Parthenius, martyred under Decius, say that these saints belonged to the household of Aemilianus, who died a Christian in the very year of his consulate.¹⁷⁹ The archeological discoveries of De Rossi¹⁸⁰ and Léon Renier¹⁸¹ confirm the exactness of this information, formerly considered doubtful by Tillemont.¹⁸²

The impulse given to religious studies by Origen, was spread by his disciples, especially in the East. At Alexandria itself, Heraclas and Dionysius, both of them converted philosophers and bishops, shed such brilliance by their teaching that scholarly Christians came to their school from all parts of the world. Julius Africanus, who was trained under Heraclas' direction,¹⁸³ published the first essay of universal chronology (the *Chronicles*), and a sort of encyclopedia (*Cestoi*, "Embroideries").¹⁸⁴ In Palestine, Theoctistus, bishop of Caesarea, and Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, remained attached to Origen as to their master.¹⁸⁵ Alexander founded a Christian library at Jerusalem. At Antioch a certain priest named Geminius, whose writings were preserved in the

¹⁷⁸ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Gregorii thaumaturgi*, P. G., XLVI.

¹⁷⁹ *Acta sanctorum*, May, IV, 302.

¹⁸⁰ De Rossi, *op. cit.*, II, 301; cf. p. 213.

¹⁸¹ Renier, *Mélanges d'épigraphie*, pp. 1-46. Cf. Allard, *Histoire des persécutions*, II, 241 ff.

¹⁸² Tillemont, *Mémoires*, vol. V, note 32 on Diocletian, and *Histoire des empereurs*, III, 310.

¹⁸³ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, xxxi.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, VI, xxvii.

Church for a long time,¹⁸⁶ followed the same traditions, though less eagerly. In Asia Minor, Firmilian in Cappadocia and Athenodorus and Theodore in Pontus were second to none in their enthusiasm for the great doctor of Alexandria and Caesarea. Nearly all these teachers paid for their faith, if not with their life, at least with their blood. The most devoted to Origen's memory and his most illustrious continuator was Theodore. Through humility he gave up the name Theodore (gift of God) and took the modest name Gregory (watcher); but the gift of miracles which God bestowed upon him brought him the glorious name of Thaumaturgus (miracle-worker).

St. Gregory Thaumaturgus

St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, bishop of Neocaesarea in Pontus, is best known for his prodigious miracles, a few of which we shall mention by way of example. Two brothers, quarreling over the possession of a pond, made him their arbitrator. He spent the night in prayer. The next day the pond was all dried up and the dispute became purposeless. The overflowing of the Lycus River caused great damage in all the neighboring country. Gregory went to the spot where the dyke usually gave way before the force of the waters. There he stuck his staff in the ground; the staff put out roots and became a large tree, thereafter protecting the dyke and the country. Two Jews wanted to make profit out of his charity. One of them asked him for an alms to help him bury his companion, who was shamming death. Gregory gave the requested alms and passed on. When the impostor ran to his accomplice, the latter was really dead. The city of Comana in Pontus was discussing the merits of certain of its clergy who were proposed for the bishopric. The bishop of Neocaesarea

¹⁸⁶ St. Jerome, *De viris illustribus*.

pointed out a man dressed in tatters, his face and hands black with coal-dirt. By a special grace from God, Gregory divined that this poor man was of noble birth and high culture, who wished to conceal, under ragged garments and the humble occupation of a charcoal burner, the higher station which he considered full of danger for his soul. Gregory had him acclaimed by the people. The Church now honors him by the name of St. Alexander the Charcoal Burner.

But Christian antiquity honored the Bishop of Neocaesarea as a theologian no less than as a miracle-worker. St. Gregory of Nyssa devoted a glorious panegyric to him. St. Gregory of Nazianzus calls him a "theophane." St. Basil appeals to his authority and, to justify one of his own doctrines, finds nothing better than to trace it back, through his grandmother St. Macrina, to "Gregory the very great."¹⁸⁷

This illustrious witness of the ancient faith did not leave many writings; moreover, St. Basil complains that his works had been altered in his time.¹⁸⁸ Yet we have from his hand an undeniably genuine document, his *Exposition of the Faith*, noteworthy for its theological importance and its place in the history of dogma, no less than for the miraculous origin attributed to it.

St. Gregory of Nyssa relates that one night the Bishop of Neocaesarea, while wondering how he should oppose the heresies spreading in the Church, was favored with a heavenly apparition. An aged man, clothed in priestly vestments, and a majestic woman of more than human beauty, appeared to him. He understood that the two persons were

¹⁸⁷ St. Basil, *Letters*, 204.

¹⁸⁸ *Idem*, 210. The *Panegyric of Origen*, of great historic value, and a Canonical Epistle which deserves to be consulted for its information regarding the penitential discipline of the early Church, were almost the only known works of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus until 1558, when De Lagarde discovered and published the Greek text of *To Philargius, on Consubstantiality* and the treatise *To Theopomus, on Divine Impassibility*. In 1883, Martin published eight homilies by St. Gregory.

St. John the Apostle and the Blessed Virgin Mary; from them he learned a doctrine which he "at once put into writing, to preach it in his church." "This document," continues the Bishop of Nyssa, "he left to his successors as an inheritance coming from God."

This symbol is a profession of faith in the "one God, Father of the living Word and of the subsisting Wisdom, Perfect begetting the Perfect; in the one Lord, Sole of the Sole, God of God; and in the one only Holy Spirit in whom is revealed the Father who is above all things; and in the perfect Trinity, which is divisible or separable neither in glory nor in eternity nor in royalty."¹⁸⁹ The Bishop of Nyssa also says that the Church of Neocaesarea in his time still preserved the manuscript of this symbol from the very hand of Gregory Thaumaturgus.

The Origenists

Unfortunately all the disciples or self-styled disciples of Origen did not have this purity of belief. In Egypt and Palestine certain ascetics made use of the name of the Alexandrian teacher not only to lead a life of almost inhuman austerity, but to maintain his most debatable theories about the end of time, without the restrictions that he attached to them. These theories they pushed to the strangest excess. Others, calling themselves Origenists, sought under the protecting patronage of such an illustrious name to renew the abominations of the Gnostics and Eastern Montanists. Some Christians were seduced by these aberrations. Forty years of peace, scarcely interrupted by Maximinus, had brought about a lessening of fervor in the rank and file of the people; the favorable attitude of the government facilitated the entrance of ordinary subjects into the Christian communities. This is a

¹⁸⁹ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita S. Gregorii Thaumaturgi*, in Migne, *P. G.*, XLVI, col. 910.

law from which the Church has never escaped: persecution decimates and purifies it; prosperity expands and corrupts it. In some regions, undisguised Montanists made havoc among the faithful by repeating the follies of Priscilla and Maximilla. In Cappadocia, after an earthquake, a prophetess took advantage of the consequent panic, stirred up the multitudes, and led them after her. She said they must flee from Cappadocia, a cursed country, and emigrate *en masse* to Jerusalem. Onward she advanced, barefoot, over mountains and through snow, followed by bands of fanatics.¹⁹⁰ A priest and a deacon of Caesarea joined the caravan, but it was the prophetess who baptized, consecrated, and presided at all the liturgical functions. The Montanists were triumphant, and pointed to these events, enlarged by imagination, as the precursory signs of the end of the world and of God's summons to the heavenly Jerusalem.

The pagan atmosphere, which the martyrs' enthusiasm held in check in times of persecution, slowly recovered its sway over souls, which it encompassed in various ways. In customs, in practices of public as well as private life, in official festivities, in works of art, everywhere could be seen the imprint of a religion that was one with the family and civic institutions. The Christian Emperor Philip kept the title of supreme pontiff; medals struck in his honor bore marks of paganism;¹⁹¹ and all this was but a manifestation and symbol of the pagan spirit which was subtly resuming its empire over those whom the faith of Christ had rescued from it. Christians were marrying unbelievers, were painting their faces, were tinting their eyelids, like pagan dandies; they were again going to the theaters, even to the gladiatorial combats. It seemed possible to believe as a Christian and to live as a

¹⁹⁰ St. Cyprian, Letter 74, sec. 10 (*Ante-Nicene Library*), being letter 75 of the Oxford edition.

¹⁹¹ See Allard, *L'Art païen sous les empereurs chrétiens*, pp. 71 ff.

pagan. Origen bemoaned the way Christians were neglecting the Church devotions,¹⁹² the way luxury was replacing the poverty of old,¹⁹³ the deacons' lack of delicacy in administering the goods of the Church;¹⁹⁴ bishops yielded to the general decline of sturdiness, seeking to grow rich through commerce and looking down on the poor.¹⁹⁵

St. Cyprian

No one reacted against this laxity more forcibly than a young African priest, who soon became bishop of Carthage. Tascius Caecilius Cyprianus was born at Carthage about A. D. 210. He grew up in the luxury of a wealthy pagan family, studied public speaking and law, was fond of the world, sought success and glory in the profession of rhetor, nay, even defended idolatry in his speeches. But paganism was unable to satisfy his upright mind, nor could it gratify his heart enamored of purity. Having made a thorough study of Christian doctrine by conferring with the priest Caecilianus (about 235), he was converted to the new faith and from that time forth radically transformed his life.¹⁹⁶ He sold his possessions, distributed the price of them to the poor, made a vow of continence, and renounced profane literature forever. In his Christian writings, which are considerable, not a single quotation from a pagan author is to be found.¹⁹⁷ He knew Tertullian in the latter's old age and always called him his teacher;¹⁹⁸ but he never had Tertullian's fiery rash-

¹⁹² Origen, *Homily 12 on Exodus*.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.* Cf. *Homily 20 on St. Matthew*, no. 25.

¹⁹⁴ *Homily 20 on St. Matthew*, no. 25.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ St. Cyprian, *Letter to Donatus*, sec. 4.

¹⁹⁷ Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne*, II, 207.

¹⁹⁸ St. Jerome says that St. Cyprian never let a day pass without reading Tertullian. He would say: "*Da magistrum*" ("Give me the master"). St. Jerome, *De viris illustribus*, chap. 53.

ness. What especially characterized this great man, the greatest the Latin Church knew from Tertullian to St. Augustine, was the harmony he accomplished between absolute mastery of himself and great gentleness towards others. Being a wonderfully well balanced genius, "usually very moderate, a friend of the just middle course, but most vigorously defending his moderate ideas,"¹⁹⁹ he found the secret of that constant harmony in a deep Christian faith, which penetrated his speech, his thought, and his life. The learned historian of Christian Africa writes that "until St. Augustine we find no writer more deeply filled with Christian thought."²⁰⁰

But just when Cyprian, chosen bishop of Carthage in 249, was about to devote himself heartily, with the new authority of his pastoral office, to the work of reforming Christian morals, an imperial edict declared the most terrible and perfidious war on Christianity that it had thus far had to sustain. Roman paganism, finding in the new Emperor a man capable of gathering together its strength, weakened by forty years of religious tolerance, rose up to avenge the old national religion against the invasion of new cults recently introduced into the Empire. The Christians were the first to suffer from this vengeance.

¹⁹⁹ Monceaux, *op. cit.*, II, 237 ff.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER V

From the Persecution of Decius to the Beginning of Diocletian's Reign (250-284)

DURING the first half of the third century there was real and almost constant peace, though it was incomplete and always precarious and threatening. But even this measure of tranquillity gave the Church an opportunity to consolidate her institutions and offered a free rein to religious studies. The second part of the century, however, was dominated by the scope and widespread effects of the persecution, if not by its length. Decius' purpose in methodically attacking the entire hierarchy was to destroy the Church as a social institution. Valerian, with an eye mostly to its possessions, tried to ruin its cult and its works. Aurelian, by using all his might to revive and protect the worship of Mithra, stirred up against the Church the most formidable religious rivalry that Christianity had ever encountered.

But the very character of these persecutions implied the recognition of a fact of utmost importance. This was the existence of the Church as a corporate, hierarchically organized, proprietary association, that is, a society perfect both in right and fact. The social character of the Church, howsoever much disturbed, survived all these shocks. Whether persecuting or tolerant, the heads of the civil society reckoned with her. "For half a century there succeeded each other the régime of Terror and the régime of Concordats."¹ Christian scholarship could not develop as at the height of the Alexandrian School; but the results of the social, as well as those of the theological organization, were not lost. New

¹ Allard, *Histoire des pers.*, II, 436.

teachers took their stand thereon in refuting new errors. Lastly, as a final result of the social benefactions of the Church and of the knowledge of her teachers, as of the courage of her martyrs, the old popular prejudices against Christians crumbled of themselves.

The cry of the second century multitudes, "To the lions with the Christians!" is no longer heard except in times of unusual calamity; and the outcry was not far-reaching. Persecution less and less evinced the feelings of the populace, and more and more became a deliberately calculated policy. Notwithstanding most cruel trials, the Church saw a strengthening of those foundations on which the work of final pacification was established under the Emperor Constantine.

Decius

Unlike the Neronian persecution, that under Decius was not the work of a despot's caprice: it was the result of a strictly conservative and pagan reaction against the favors granted the Christians under Emperor Philip, a jealous rivalry against the social status acquired by Christianity during the first part of the third century. Decius was merely the instrument of that reaction and rivalry—an instrument wonderfully adapted to the task laid upon him by the faction which put him on the throne. The pagan writers praise him as a man of Stoic regularity of life,² but the Christians denounce him as "an accursed wild beast" for his work of calculating and methodical destruction.³ He was the narrow mind and implacable arm at the service of a passion. The divinity of Jupiter and Minerva gave him little concern, or rather he confused it with the divinity of the Roman State,

² Aurelius Victor, *Epitome*, 29; Zosimus, *Historiae*, bk. 1, chap. 21; Trebellus Pollio, *Claudius*, 13.

³ Lactantius, *Death of the Persecutors*, 4; St. Optatus, *Against the Donatists*, bk. 3, sec. 8; Dionysius of Alexandria, quoted in Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, xli.

the only divinity he understood and adored, if we may say that it is adoring anything or anyone to sacrifice everything to it or him, even justice and pity.⁴

The pagan reaction did not wait for the end of Philip's reign to show itself. A letter of St. Dionysius of Alexandria, preserved in Eusebius' *Church History*, gives us a lifelike account of an uprising against the Christians of Alexandria in 249. Dionysius had just been installed there, when a man, whom the holy Bishop calls "a certain wicked prophet and poet," succeeded in persuading the people that their gods were imperilled by the Christians. "He excited the mass of the heathen against us," says Dionysius; "they considered this the only piety and the worship of their demons, namely, to slay us."⁵ They began by seizing an old man and, upon his refusal to pronounce certain impious words, they beat him, thrust pointed reeds into his face, dragged him through the streets, and stoned him. A virgin, Apollina by name, received so many violent blows on her jaw that all her teeth were broken. A maddened throng rushed upon the houses of Christians, who were robbed and driven from their homes. Night and day the streets resounded with the cry: "Anybody that refuses to blaspheme Christ will be dragged away and burned!" These scenes of violence continued until an outbreak of civil war in the city gave the mob's savage fury another direction. The Christians then enjoyed a respite, which, however, did not last long. Soon Decius' edict inflamed the persecution and, in a way, made it more dreadful, by putting it under the direction of the authorities.

Decius' Edict of Persecution

We do not possess the text of this decree. But contemporary testimony, especially the letters of St. Cyprian and

⁴ See Fustel de Coulanges, *Ancient City*, pp. 484 ff.

⁵ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, xli.

the authentic Acts of the martyrs, enable us to reconstruct its sense, without risk of substantial error. All the Christians of the Empire, both clergy and laity, born in Christianity or converts, were commanded to present themselves on a certain day ⁶ for the purpose of offering sacrifice to the gods of the Empire ⁷ and of abjuring their faith in Christ.⁸ Disobedience entailed a criminal trial. Thus officially prosecuted, the Christians were first to be tortured and, if the torture did not make them abjure, they were to be punished with banishment or death. The possessions of exiles and fugitives escheated to the imperial treasury. There had never been any edict of persecution conceived in such general yet precise terms. The aim of Septimius Severus had been to halt the spread of Christianity, and he took account especially of converts and those who were making converts; Maximinus selected mostly bishops and scholars for his attack; the edict of Decius reached everybody, without qualification and required all the followers of Christ to abjure the faith.

Terrible was the effect produced by this edict. Then was verified the thought so concisely expressed in the *Imitation of Christ* eleven centuries later: "Temptations do not make us wicked; they show us what sort of men we are." Softness of life had penetrated nearly everywhere: at first defection was well-nigh universal. A reliable witness, St. Dionysius of Alexandria, in an undeniably genuine document, has left us the following impressive picture:

"The Emperor's decree had arrived, very much like that which was foretold by our Lord, exhibiting the most dreadful aspect; so that, if it were possible, the very elect would stumble. All, indeed, were greatly alarmed, and many of the more eminent immediately gave way to

⁶ St. Cyprian, *De lapsis*, 2-3.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 8; Letter 52.

⁸ St. Cyprian, *De lapsis*, 8.

them; others, who were in public offices, were led forth by their very acts; others were brought by their acquaintance, and when called by name, they approached the impure and unholy sacrifices. But pale and trembling as if they were not to sacrifice, but themselves to be the victims and the sacrifices to the idols, they were jeered by many of the surrounding multitude, and were obviously equally afraid to die and to offer the sacrifice. But some advanced with greater readiness to the altars, and boldly asserted that they had never before been Christians. Concerning whom the declaration of our Lord is most true, that they will scarcely be saved.”⁹

Yet pagan practices had not affected all the Christians and even among the most softened there remained a basis of deep faith. Seeing the example of some heroes, the Christians as a whole finally recovered themselves. As St. Dionysius says: “solid and blessed pillars of the Lord, confirmed by the Lord Himself, and receiving in themselves strength and power, suited and proportioned to their faith, became admirable witnesses of His kingdom.”¹⁰ At sight of their heroism, we shall see the “lapsed,” as they were called, humbly asking to be readmitted into the Church.

The persecution raged at all points of the Empire at one and the same time. Rome, Italy, Greece, Asia, and Africa gave martyrs. The crisis was short: beginning in 250, it was almost ended in May 251, even before Decius' death. But never did persecution so deeply upset the Church. The scandal of the apostasies, the profound uneasiness that resulted from it in the Church, the efforts of the *lapsi* to obtain reconciliation, the disputes that arose on this point between those favoring rigor and those favoring mercy, the schisms that resulted, all these extended and prolonged the disturbance produced by this short and violent crisis.

⁹ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, xli.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Pope St. Fabian

Decius was cold and methodical. He shed blood with a calculating mind. In making him regard Christians as enemies of the Empire, the Emperor's political sense deceived him;¹¹ but it was not at fault when it persuaded him that the bishop of Rome was the supreme and indispensable head of the Church. Decius ascended the imperial throne in October 249; on January 20, Pope St. Fabian was martyred. We have no details of his death; all we possess is a letter of St. Cyprian "to the priests and deacons abiding at Rome," who had sent him the sad news. "When the report of the departure of the excellent man, my colleague, was still uncertain among us, I received a letter sent to me from you, in which I was most abundantly informed of his glorious end. What is thus glorious to you in connection with the memory of your bishop, ought also to afford me an example of faith and virtue."¹²

What Decius wanted to attack was not so much Fabian's person as his sovereign authority. His purpose was not so much to suppress a man as to overthrow a rival institution.

¹¹ Aubé (in *L'Église dans la seconde moitié du III^e siècle*, pp. 4, 7, 13 f.) and Bouché-Léclercq (in *L'Intolérance religieuse et la politique*) seek to justify Decius, and the persecuting emperors in general, on the ground of a necessity of social defense. True, the Empire in the middle of the third century was endangered by the barbarous races that were pressing on its frontiers. But the Christians hardly figured in these vast migrations. The Empire was likewise endangered from within, by a lessening of the military spirit and by the aristocracy's abandoning political careers. But surely it was not the fault of the Church that Commodus, Caracalla, and Gallienus had to exempt from military service all the senators, the urban decurions, nearly all the middle class, that finally all compulsory military service had to be abolished, to such an extent that the army was wholly made up of "soldiers furnished by contract" (Dury, *History of Rome*, VII, 196), that, beginning with Trajan's reign, the rich had to be forced to accept the offices of decurion, edile, and duumvir. Littré is quite correct in saying that, "since the imperial authority lacked the power to maintain or vivify anything, there would have been a profound stagnation, had it not been for the coming of Christianity." (Littré, *Études sur les Barbares*, p. 27.)

¹² St. Cyprian, Letter 3, sec. 1.

For eighteen months—that is so long as Decius was able to reside in Rome—he succeeded, by trickery, terrorism, and various intrigues, in preventing the election of a successor to the martyred Pope. Not until the spring of 251, when the Emperor had to go to Mysia to combat an invasion of the Goths, did the Christians feel free to elect a successor to St. Fabian.

St. Agatha

Among the victims of the Decian persecution in Italy tradition places the illustrious martyr of Catania, St. Agatha. "The account which we have of her martyrdom is the work of a late writer. . . . Yet certain exact traces seem to have been preserved. It would be hard to place among the narrator's inventions Agatha's sublime replies to the questions of the governor of Sicily. The judge asks her: 'What is your status?' To this she replies: 'I am free and noble born, as is evidenced by all my relations.' 'If you come of so noble and illustrious a family,' said the judge, 'why do you lead the base life of a slave?' Agatha answered: 'I am the servant of Christ, and therefore of servile status.' 'If you were really of noble family,' said he, 'you would not humble yourself even to the taking of the title of slave.' 'The highest nobility,' she replied, 'is to be the slave of Christ.'"¹³ This is in perfect conformity with the feelings and manner of speech of the Christians of that period, who were at times pleased to assume, out of humility, the title and way of living of slaves.¹⁴

St. Pionius

In Greece the Christians, more enervated than elsewhere, were abandoned by their Bishop Endaemon, who was said

¹³ *Acta sanctorum*, February, I, 621.

¹⁴ Allard, *Histoire des pers.*, II, 301. Cf. Allard, *Les Esclaves chrétiens*, pp. 239 ff.

to have gone over to the pagan priesthood. They apostatized *en masse*. Three, however, gave an example of admirable courage. On February 23, 250, the anniversary of the death of St. Polycarp, says the Acts, the priest Pionius celebrated the sacrifice in honor of the martyrs in the presence of a Christian, Asclepiades by name, and of a Christian woman, Sabina. The latter was a slave whom the Christians had rescued from her cruel pagan mistress. She had retired to Smyrna, to the house of the holy priest Pionius, a former orator famous for his eloquence, but especially praiseworthy for his virtue. "The Eucharistic prayers were scarcely concluded, those present had scarcely consumed the consecrated bread and wine, when the city officer Polemon entered the apartment, followed by several policemen. When he saw Pionius, he said to him: 'You are not ignorant of the imperial decree commanding you to sacrifice.' To this Pionius replied: 'As for decrees, we recognize only those which command us to adore God.' The officer then said: 'Come with me to the public square.'

"When they reached the square, a large crowd poured into it. They all wanted to see. Those who were short stood on ladders or boxes. Pionius, having reached the middle of the square, held out his hand and, with smiling and radiant face, addressed the people thus: 'Men of Smyrna, you who love the beauty of your walls, the splendor of your city and the glory of your poet Homer, hear me. I am told that you ridicule the Christians, who, yielding to force, have sacrificed to the gods. Allow me to remind you of Homer's words, "Rejoice not over those who are dead, insult not a blind man, assault not a corpse." I prefer to undergo death and torture rather than contradict what I have learned and taught.' He spoke a long time. The whole multitude listened so attentively that no one dared to interrupt him. When he had finished, he was led to one of the shrines at the side of the square. There one after the other tried to make him yield, saying:

'Pionius, you are pure and gentle. You are worthy to live. You have many reasons for loving life. How good it is to live and to breathe in this sweet light.' Pionius replied: 'Yes, yes, it is good to be filled with light. I do not despise the gifts of God. But I look for a more beautiful light.' Polemon then said to him: 'Sacrifice!' He answered: 'No!' When asked, 'What God do you adore?' he said: 'The almighty God, whom we know by His Word, Jesus Christ.' Asclepiades was then questioned: 'Which is your God?' 'Christ,' he answered. They asked him: 'Is He then another?' 'No,' replied Asclepiades, 'He is the same God that we have just confessed.'

"A few days afterward, when Pionius gave like replies before the proconsul, he was condemned to be burnt alive. Stakes were set up, to which Pionius and a Marcionite priest named Metrodorus were fastened. The latter was at the left of Pionius, who kept his eyes and his soul fixed upon Heaven. Firewood was piled about them and kindled. Pionius, closing his eyes, prayed silently. Then his face shone with a keen joy. He said 'Amen' and gave up his soul like a light breath. Such was the death of the blessed Pionius, a gentle and pure man, without blame or sin."¹⁵ This is the account in the Acts. What happened to Sabina and Asclepiades? The Acts do not say. Probably they were martyred along with Pionius, or shortly after.¹⁶

St. Babylas

Among the martyrs in proconsular Asia we should not forget St. Babylas, the courageous bishop of Antioch, who fearlessly halted the Emperor Philip at the door of the church and made him expiate the crime which brought him to the throne. Although St. Babylas' martyrdom is certain, we do

¹⁵ *Acta sanctorum*, February, I, 37-46; Leclercq, *Les Martyrs*, II, 67-88; Eusebius, IV, xv.

¹⁶ Allard, *op. cit.*, II, 388.

not know the circumstances of it. According to Eusebius, he died in prison at Antioch.¹⁷ St. Chrysostom says he was beheaded.¹⁸ It is said that he wished to be buried with his chains and that a hundred years later, when his body was brought near the temple of Apollo at Daphne, it silenced the oracle that spoke there.¹⁹

St. Acacius

Acacius, bishop of Antioch in Pisidia, was also arrested. His trial is one of the most curious recorded. We have the authentic Latin translation of the original court record, which must have been written in Greek.²⁰ We will quote its principal passages. It is a precious document, for it is a sort of abridgment of the arguments used between Christians and pagans.

A certain Martianus, said to be of consular rank, addressed Acacius:

Martianus: "You profit from the Roman laws; you should love our rulers."

Acacius: "Who loves the Emperor as much as the Christians do? We pray assiduously for him."

Martianus: "I congratulate you on these sentiments. Therefore offer a sacrifice to the Emperor."

Acacius: "I pray to the true God for my ruler, who has no right to require that I sacrifice to him. Who can worship a man?"

Martianus: "Tell us who this God is, that we may honor Him."

Acacius then pretends not to see the irony of this question. He begins by setting forth at length the faith of the Christians, then with animated irony and indignation he attacks

¹⁷ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, xxxix.

¹⁸ *De sancto Babyla*, II.

¹⁹ Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 427.

²⁰ See Leclercq, *Les Martyrs*, II, 89 ff.

the divinities of paganism. Evidently he is aware of the skepticism of the examining magistrate: he repeats and tartly revives the chief criticisms of Euhemerus against the pagan gods. The judge lets him say what he wishes, replies tamely, not very anxious to subject himself to the ridicule of an apology which would be suspected of not being very sincere. The Bishop triumphantly insists and grows more censorious and acrid. Finally the judge loses patience and interrupts him: "Sacrifice or die!" Acacius replies: "You are like the Dalmatian highwaymen, who use only one expression, 'Your money or your life!' to cut off any discussion with those whom they have seized. Condemn me; but hear what our Holy Books say: 'With what judgment you judge, you shall be judged.'" To this Martianus answers: "I am not here to judge, but to compel."

These words very clearly enunciate the aim of Decius' decree. It did not enter the Emperor's mind to pass judgment on the doctrine of the Christians or to measure the degree of their guilt; he wanted to wipe them out by apostasy or by death. Martianus, perhaps because of the Bishop's popularity, declined to assume responsibility for his condemnation, and therefore sent a report of the trial to the Emperor. Decius was even more of a skeptic than Martianus. And it may be that he was interested in the humorous style in which the head of the Church of Antioch ridiculed the gods that were none of his concern. Further, Decius' systematic policy was implacable, but he was personally not wicked. It has been noted that, every time he had an accused person before him, he showed him indulgence. A contemporary document relates that one day at Rome, when the Emperor was presiding at the trial of some martyrs, he granted pardon to one of them, Celerinus, whose youth and courage had touched him.²¹ Acacius' unruffled daring had the same result. The messenger

²¹ Letter of St. Lucian to Celerinus, in St. Cyprian, *Letters*, 21.

who was sent to Rome with the report of his trial brought back the Emperor's pardon for the accused.

The Persecution in Africa

Christian Africa, proud of its ninety bishops²² and of the glory of its Tertullian, had the appearance of great vitality. Yet its fervor, which was more superficial than deep, more clamorous than solid, paved the way for many disappointments. There were, indeed, some who faced the executioners undaunted and who entered the amphitheater with the stride of a gladiator.²³ Besides these, and even among them, were so-called Christians who are spoken of by St. Cyprian as proud, attached to worldly interests, affected, and fond of luxury,²⁴ and members of the clergy who were careless of their duties, pompous, and jealous of one another.²⁵ These Phenicians and Berbers spoke Latin, but they had not acquired the Roman discipline; their minds were eager for Greek culture, but did not possess the polish of Athens or Alexandria.

Between the years 236 and 248 the Church of Africa was disturbed by lamentable divisions, the cause and nature of which are unknown to us. The letters of St. Cyprian inform us that Privatus, bishop of Lambaesa, the first church after that of Carthage, had to be condemned as a heretic by a council; that Donatus, bishop of Carthage, and Fabian, bishop of Rome, wrote severe letters against him.²⁶ In 249, by almost

²² This is the number given by the African council that condemned Privatus of Lambaesa. On Christianity in Africa, its beginnings, organization, internal conflicts, martyrs, councils, and great men, see Aug. Audollent's scholarly article "*Afrique*," in the *Dict. d'hist. et de géog. ecclés.*, I, cols. 705-861. Columns 853-861 contain a very complete bibliography.

²³ See *supra*, p. 326, Tertullian's text, which was able to provoke such demeanor.

²⁴ St. Cyprian, *De lapsis*, 5, 6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ St. Cyprian, Letter 69.

unanimous choice, Cyprian became bishop of Carthage. Even at that date the ferment of revolt had not subsided. Five priests formed an opposition which lasted throughout his episcopate. One of these priests was Novatus, who gratified his dissenting spirit by taking advantage of the disturbed condition of Africa, made the more distressing by the persecution. Through intrigues he succeeded in forming a schism which, once established in Africa, found enough accomplices in Rome and the East to spread and invade almost the whole Church.

When Decius' decree reached the African provinces, it gave rise to two extreme attitudes. Those who consulted only their own ease hurried to the offices of the magistrates even before the prescribed time limit, for the purpose of performing the required sacrifices. For several days processions of prominent people might be seen at Carthage going up the steps of the Capitol, followed by their slaves and freedmen and farmer-tenants. Parents led their little children, and husbands their wives.²⁷ The rich offered goats, sheep, and oxen; the poor cast a little incense on the altar. Then at tables prepared for the purpose, they all ate some of the sacrificed meats, and passed from one to another the cup of libations. The sacrilege was then completed. At Saturnum, Repostus, the bishop, headed the procession going to the temple to sacrifice.²⁸

But soon there was talk of terrifying signs of divine vengeance. A woman who had sacrificed was suddenly taken with severe pains and died while furiously biting her tongue, which had touched the profane food. St. Cyprian testifies as follows: "With my own eyes I saw a little child, whose nurse had defiled his lips with the wine of idols, vomit forth the Savior's blood which was offered him."²⁹ The stream of apostasies ceased. The imperial courts then began to act. Those who re-

²⁷ All these details are given by St. Cyprian, *De lapsis*, 8 f.; *Letters*, 10, 19, 59.

²⁸ St. Cyprian, Letter 64.

²⁹ *De lapsis*, 25.

sisted were imprisoned and horribly tortured. Their bodies were lacerated with iron prongs, which were used to scrape their bleeding wounds. In the words of St. Cyprian, "it was no longer the limbs, but the wounds of the servants of God that were tortured."³⁰ Remarkable constancy and humility were displayed by a number of Christians, as Paul, Fortunion, Bassus, Mappalicus and his companions. Others delivered speeches, put on a bold front, and aroused the wonderment of the multitude.³¹ The executioners' instructions were, not to kill, but to compel the Christians to sacrifice; the torture would be interrupted for a while, and then resumed. In this way a goodly number of these confessors of the faith survived the persecution. Among them was a certain Lucian, who later was one of the first promoters of the schism.

St. Cyprian

At the very outset Cyprian had to make up his mind. At Carthage, as at Rome, the bishop was one of the first aimed at. As soon as the decree was published, the pagan throngs shouted: "Cyprian to the lions!"³² "Those around him thought, and he felt also, that being so well known in Carthage, he would inevitably be arrested, and that in such an acute crisis the bishop's life would count for more than would his martyrdom. He left the town and found a safe retreat outside, where he evaded the search of the authorities, but kept up communications with his flock, and especially with those clerics who had contrived to remain with them."³³ Flight in time of persecution had always been considered permissible. On more than one occasion the Church proclaimed this truth against the exaggerations of Marcionism and Montanism. But the

³⁰ Letter 8.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Letter 55 (*Ante-Nicene Library*, Letter 54).

³³ Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 289.

Bishop's relentless enemies were not slow to profit by his flight, hoping thus to undermine his authority.

They proceeded with the utmost cleverness. First they sought to have him condemned by the Church of Rome. Not the least proof of the universal authority of the Roman Church at that time is this attempt to influence it in favor of the schism. The details of the intrigues that were contrived are unknown to us. We have only the letter written to Cyprian, during the interregnum between Fabian's death and the election of Cornelius, by the presbyteral council that was directing affairs at Rome. It was intended for the clergy of Carthage and, between the lines of deferential and moderate expressions, it intimated a disapproval of Cyprian's flight.³⁴ For him to show that he had fulfilled his duty as pastor so far as the situation allowed, he had only to make a frank statement of the reasons for his withdrawal and to send to Rome thirteen letters written by him to his Church from the time of his leaving the episcopal city.³⁵

Thus the first scheme failed. Novatus and his accomplices were more successful in their second move. It consisted in contrasting the bishop who fled with the Christians who confessed their faith by undergoing torture. The persecutors, either from weariness or for some other reason, had released a large number of the latter. The rebellious faction intoxicated them with praise. Those who had not yielded to the threats of the executioner, were caught in the snare of flattery. It was an old custom for bishops to take into account the requests of martyrs in shortening the period of penitential probation. The apostasy of the lapsed was liable to perpetual penance. Perfidiously Novatus and his friends told the apostates that the confessors had the power to pardon them. At the head of the confessors was Lucian, who, because he bore on his body the scars of numerous wounds received for the faith, came to be regarded as a

³⁴ Letter 55 (*inter Cyprianicas*).

³⁵ St. Cyprian, *Letters*, 5, 6, 7, 10-19.

being superior to the rest of mankind. And he gave it out that he was deputed by a martyr named Paul, and distributed countless *libelli* of indulgence. These *libelli* were not, like those of the early martyrs, notes of recommendation, submitting the case of the lapsed to the judgment of the bishop; they were letters of pardon, in terms of command, *e. g.*, "*Communicet cum suis*," "Let him return to the communion of his brethren." And priests admitted the lapsed to the Sacraments without referring the matter to the bishop. To act thus was to set up a religious authority above the bishop and in opposition to him, contrary to all tradition.

Cyprian wrote three pastoral letters from his place of retreat: one to the confessors, exhorting them to give *libelli* only to the lapsed whose penance was nearing its completion;³⁶ the second was to his priests, absolutely forbidding them to receive any of the lapsed into communion on their own authority;³⁷ the third letter was to the people, advising patience, peace, and obedience to the bishop's authority.³⁸ The wiser minds heeded these words of their bishop and left the solution of the pending difficulties to him. Cyprian's decisions were prudent and moderate. He showed himself exacting in the case of those who spontaneously, at the first behest, rushed to offer an impious sacrifice; he was less severe toward those who resisted a long time before falling; he was still more indulgent toward those who, though not really offering sacrifice, had by money payments obtained a certificate of sacrifice. These last were called *libellatici*.³⁹ They were guilty, since "it was criminal for them to pass for apostates, even if they had not apostatized."⁴⁰ Nevertheless the guilt of the *libellatici* was not so great as that of the *sacrificati*.

³⁶ Letter 10.

³⁷ Letter 9.

³⁸ Letter 11.

³⁹ Letter 52.

⁴⁰ Letter 21 (*inter Cyprianicas*.)

These decisions, in conformity with those which the clergy and confessors gave at Rome,⁴¹ would have ended the conflict if the purpose of the ringleaders had not been to make trouble for the Bishop at any price. The confessor Lucian, in the name of a group of confessors, wrote an insolent letter to Cyprian.⁴² The *libelli pacis* increased in number. There was a regular traffic in them. As Cyprian expresses it, there was "a *libelli* fair."⁴³ The maneuver was to combine against the Bishop both the confessors and the lapsed by conferring sovereign authority on the former, and by offering the latter, at a discount, the power to escape the penance which they had incurred.

The Schism of Felicissimus

Only one step remained to be taken: to organize a schism. This was done toward the end of 250. The five priests who had unceasingly conspired against Cyprian formed its nucleus. Novatus was the soul of the conspiracy. Its nominal leader was Felicissimus, a rich layman of doubtful morals, but of considerable influence because of his wealth and social standing. At once Cyprian summoned a meeting of the bishops of the region. The purpose was to prepare the way for Cyprian's return by ending the schism. Felicissimus and his friends would not listen to anything. The council excommunicated them. Novatus then left for Rome. His intention was nothing less than to obtain backing for himself in the Roman Church.

The gradual abatement of the persecution gave hope that the papal interregnum was nearing its end and that soon the

⁴¹ Two letters from Rome, with which all the churches were acquainted, referred the case of the *lapsi* to the decision of the bishops, who would act after peace became established. Previously, only those who were in danger of death could be reconciled.

⁴² Letter 16 (*inter Cyprianicas*).

⁴³ "*Negociationis mundinas*." Letter 10.

election of a bishop of Rome could be held. The future successor of St. Peter must be "the pope of the confessors," "the pope of the martyrs." This is what Novatus kept repeating when he arrived in the Eternal City. He found the Christians there divided. Among the candidates for the tiara was a learned priest, but one inured to scheming. His name was Novatian.⁴⁴ During the persecution he had succeeded, by means that were far from heroic, in evading the search by the authorities;⁴⁵ and he had also obtained a preponderant influence in the presbyteral council. He is the one who, in the name of the Roman clergy and confessors, wrote the letters condemning the attitude of the Carthaginian confessors and approving that of the bishop. But the fomenters of schism are always grouped according to their passions and interests rather than according to their ideas. Novatus and Novatian, as soon as they met, made common cause. Their plan seems to have been, first, to stir up among the confessors of the faith at Rome a movement like the one at Carthage. In this they did not fully succeed. A venerable priest named Moses, who had been imprisoned for several months past, edified the whole Church by his patience in the midst of tortures and privations. The plotters tried to win him over. But when he saw that he was really being asked to abet the cause of five priests in rebellion against their bishop, he refused to join the movement.⁴⁶ After his death (January or February, 251) some of his comrades in prison were unfortunately seduced. Yet this success did not seem enough. Novatus and Novatian concentrated their efforts upon the papal election, which disconcerted their plot. In the spring

⁴⁴ His "treatise *De Trinitate* is written with a care for order and method, which made it for a long time the model of works of the same kind. . . . His writings are the first which were composed in Latin at Rome on theological topics." (Tixeront, *History of Dogmas*, I, 327).

⁴⁵ Letter 16; Eusebius, VI, xliii.

⁴⁶ Eusebius, *loc. cit.*

of 251,⁴⁷ the priest chosen to succeed St. Fabian was Cornelius, well known as a man of gentle and moderate character, and everywhere venerated for his lofty virtue. It is supposed that he belonged to the upper aristocracy of Rome. One of his first acts was to assemble a council of sixty bishops, which approved the decisions of the Bishop of Carthage regarding the lapsed. The whole Church in the West promptly accepted this approval.⁴⁸ Thus the schism of Felicissimus received its death blow.

The Schism of Novatian

A rumor quickly spread that the bishop of Rome was not Cornelius, but Novatian. Two friends of the latter, one probably being Novatus, went to southern Italy and there persuaded three bishops, simple countrified men, to come immediately to Rome and join with other bishops in putting down a great conflict. Once at Rome, they were circumvented, threatened, deceived, and, in the evening, after a plentiful dinner, they were induced to give Novatian the liturgical consecration that made him a bishop.⁴⁹ It was reported that Cornelius' election was absolutely null and void because he had made himself radically unworthy of the episcopal dignity by obtaining from the Roman authorities a certificate of apostasy and by communicating with apostates. Novatus and Novatian championed the strictest requirements. According to them apostates must give up all hope of being again received into the Church, even

⁴⁷ Tillemont, *Mémoires*, vol. III, note 1 on St. Cornelius, says it was in June, 251. But Doucet (*Essai sur les rapports de l'Eglise avec l'Etat romain*) fixes March as the date of the election.

⁴⁸ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, xliii.

⁴⁹ Details of this ordination may be seen in a letter from Pope Cornelius, quoted by Eusebius (*H. E.*, VI, xliii). The language of this letter is sharp. But the vivacity with which the facts are told and judged is not such as to weaken their substantial truth.

at their last breath; and anyone who pardoned them, thereby condemned himself.⁵⁰ Thus Novatian, and especially Novatus, broke with their former doctrines. But revolutionary spirits are ever more anxious to be in logical accord with their goal than with their principles. The goal of Novatus and Novatian was to wreck the authority of Pope Cornelius. They thought their purpose would be furthered by having Cornelius' moderation looked upon as an apostasy, and his so-called apostasy as a radical irregularity vitiating his election.

Novatianism, therefore, posed as the party of strict and incorruptible morality. Its success was due to this assumed position, to the regard in which Novatian was held, and to the active propaganda of Novatus. Outside of Rome, a little Novatian Church was founded at Carthage under the direction of one of the consecrators of Novatian, Evaristus by name, and of a Roman confessor, Nicostratus. In Gaul, Bishop Marcian of Arles made use of Novatian's principle in the government of his diocese, and joined the schism. In the East, the rigorist ideas triumphed, especially at Antioch, where Bishop Fabius openly endorsed them, and they spread in various parts of Asia Minor. The followers of the sect called themselves *Cathari* (Puritans).⁵¹ Their leader dedicated an encyclical "to those who have remained firm in the Gospel."⁵²

The danger was a serious one. A council presided over by Cornelius had condemned the doctrine of extreme indulgence; another council condemned the doctrine of extreme rigor. Sixty bishops, assembled at Rome—not counting the priests and deacons who accompanied or represented their bishops—condemned Novatian, his followers, and his doctrine.

But the dissenters did not recognize Cornelius' authority or that of the assembly which they called "his council." If

⁵⁰ For a résumé of Novatian's teaching, see St. Pacianus, Letter 3.

⁵¹ St. Cyprian, Letters 41 and 59.

⁵² "*Plebi in Evangelio perstanti salutem.*" (Dedication of the *De Cibis*.)

their eyes were to be opened and they were to be made to love the truth, they would have to be convinced, their errors would have to be refuted, and the unsoundness of their leaders' reasoning would have to be made plain. The task of doing this was undertaken by Cyprian of Carthage and Dionysius of Alexandria.

St. Dionysius of Alexandria

Next to Gregory Thaumaturgus, the most brilliant disciple of Origen was Dionysius, whom Eusebius and St. Basil call Dionysius the Great. He was born of a distinguished though pagan family at Alexandria. The Didascalia enlightened him as to the truth of Christianity. He was converted and soon elevated to the episcopal see of his native city. Like Cyprian, he judged it prudent to elude the persecutors by flight, and like him, he later showed that base fear had no part in his decision. Except for some fragments preserved by Eusebius, most of his works have perished. Eusebius says that Dionysius wrote extensively on the subject of penance and the *lapsi*. Therein he set forth a doctrine conformable to that of Pope Cornelius and St. Cyprian. He zealously opposed the Novatian Church established at Antioch,⁵³ reported to Cornelius regarding his labors against the heresy, and wrote to Novatian the following letter, which Eusebius inserts in his *History*. It reveals a tender charity as well as a deep faith:

"Dionysius sends greeting to his brother Novatian. If, as you say, you were forced against your will, you will show it by returning voluntarily. For it was a duty to suffer anything at all, so as not to afflict the Church of God; and, indeed, it would not be more inglorious to suffer even martyrdom for its sake, than to sacrifice; and in my opinion it would have been a greater glory. For there, in the one case, the individual gives a testimony for his own soul, but in the other he

⁵³ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, xlvii.

bears witness for the whole Church. And now, if thou persuade or constrain the brethren to return to unanimity, thy uprightness will be greater than thy delusion, and the latter will not be laid to thy charge, but the other will be applauded; but if thou art unable to prevail with thy friends, save thine own soul. With the hope that thou art desirous of peace in the Lord, I bid thee farewell.”⁵⁴

St. Cyprian's Treatise *De Unitate Ecclesiae*

The schism of Novatian was the occasion for the writing of St. Cyprian's immortal treatise, *De Unitate Ecclesiae*. The Church, he says, is the spouse of Christ. “He cannot have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother (*Habere non potest Deum patrem qui Ecclesiam not habet matrem*).”⁵⁵ But the Church is one. St. Cyprian bases the unity of the Church upon two foundations. The first is Christ's words to St. Peter: “*Tu es Petrus*.” By these words the Savior founded the Church upon one man. The second foundation is this fact, that gifts made by Christ, particularly Baptism, the priesthood, and the altar, belong to the legitimate Church and to no other. The interpretation of this second principle later gave rise to the baptismal controversy. Cyprian concluded that the fomenters of schism have no excuse. The least excusable are those who, in time of persecution, showed themselves courageous confessors of the faith. This remark was a direct blow to the confessors whom Novatian had led after him and whose

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, VI, xlv. (As to whether this letter was addressed to Novatus or Novatian, see Migne, *P. G.*, XX, 633, note. Tr.)

⁵⁵ *De unitate*, 6. Harnack (*History of Dogma*, II, 76) considers the expression “*Mater Ecclesia*” as peculiar to Africa. And he also thinks that in this matter Clement of Alexandria does not agree with the Africans. Certainly the doctors of the Church in Africa were fond of calling the Church the Mother of Christians. (See Tertullian, *To the Martyrs*, I, 2; *Against Marcion*, bk. 5, chap. 4; *On Monogamy*, 7; *On Prayer*, 2, quoted by A. d'Alès, *La Théologie de Tertullien*, p. 215.) It is true that Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* VI, 16) interprets the commandment to honor one's father and mother in relation to the divine Wisdom rather than with reference to the Church; but in two well-known passages he clearly speaks of “our mother the Church” (*Pedagogue*, I,

authority he sought to make supreme.⁵⁶ Cyprian also addressed the followers of Felicissimus,⁵⁷ who were raising their heads at Carthage. The leader of the schism at length assembled a so-called council at Carthage. Twenty-five bishops were notified. Five came, of whom three were apostates and two, heretics. One of the latter was Privatus of Lambaesa, cut off from the Church by a previous council. Cyprian at once (May 15, 252) assembled a council of forty bishops, who again proclaimed the true principles of penance. The pseudo-council replied by declaring Cyprian deposed and electing in his place a certain Fortunatus, whom Felicissimus vainly tried to have acknowledged by Rome. Thus the schism did in its own way bear witness to the supreme authority of the Roman Church, of which St. Cyprian said that it was "the chief Church whence priestly unity takes its source (*Ecclesia principalis unde unitas sacerdotalis exorta est*)."⁵⁸

The Question of Rebaptism

The controversy raised by the question of the *lapsi* was not yet ended, when the baptismal controversy sprang up. All the

5 and 6). Moreover, this idea of the Church as our Mother is a classical and universal conception from the second century onwards. This notion is one of which St. Irenaeus is especially fond; it is met with also in the letter of the martyrs of Lyons and in the *Shepherd* of Hermas.

⁵⁶ It has been justly remarked that the sole aim of St. Cyprian's treatise is to plead the need and importance of the unity of each individual church, and thereby of the authority of the bishop. That was, in fact, the chief point at issue in the recent conflicts with Felicissimus, Novatus, and Novatian. St. Cyprian does not concern himself with the question of the unity of the universal Church; but this is not excluded by his reasoning. On the contrary, the principle of unity which he urges and defends for each church, is also valid for the universal Church. And the unity of the latter is the best guaranty for the unity of the former. As Bossuet says: "Unity is the guardian of unity." (Cf. Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, pp. 364 ff.)

⁵⁷ Was the *De unitate Ecclesiae* written against the party of Novatian, as Tillemont (*Mémoires*, IV, 105) held, or against that of Felicissimus, as Chapman thinks (*Revue bénédictine*, 1902 and 1903)? We are inclined to believe that St. Cyprian had both factions in mind.

⁵⁸ Letter 59, sec. 14.

sects which, one after the other, claimed to absorb in themselves the Christian movement, had perished wretchedly. Judeo-Christian heresies, Gnosticism, Marcionism, Montanism, and Novatianism, all gradually died out. Many of their followers humbly begged for admission into the traditional Christian communities. But what conditions must these repentant heretics be obliged to fulfil? The question was a simple one, and everybody agreed in the same solution whenever it was a case of a heretic who had been baptized in the true Church. He was reconciled by the "penitential" imposition of hands, or in some instances by anointing with oil,⁵⁹ but without a repetition of his baptism, the validity of which could not be questioned. But it was different when the repentant heretic had been baptized in a sect that was already separated from the Church.

The solution of the question seems never to have raised the least shadow of a doubt in Cyprian's mind. He regarded it as a corollary of his concept of the Church, as he had expounded it in the *De Unitate Ecclesiae*. He held that Baptism conferred outside the Church was no Baptism at all.⁶⁰ At the beginning of 255 he set forth this conclusion in a long letter,⁶¹ basing his doctrine on two arguments. First, Baptism conferred outside the Church cannot be a true Baptism, because Baptism forgives sins; but, the Church alone has this power; in it alone are found grace and the means of communicating or receiving it; it alone is the spouse of Christ, it alone can bring forth children to Christ. The saying: "Outside the Church, no Baptism,"

⁵⁹ According to some authors, this would have constituted the Sacrament of Confirmation. (Tixeront, *op. cit.*, I, 366.) If this be so, persons so acting must have misunderstood the character of this Sacrament, which no one can receive more than once. On the early rites of Confirmation and on the problems arising from the diversity of these rites, see J. de Guibert, art. "Confirmation," in the *Dict. apol. de la foi cath.*, II, cols. 651-654.

⁶⁰ "Non abluuntur hic homines, sed potius sordidantur." (*De unitate ecclesiae*, II.)

⁶¹ Letter 69.

is the logical consequence of the expression: "Outside the Church, no Holy Ghost."⁶² Secondly, how can a minister of the Sacrament, who has neither the true faith, nor grace, nor the Holy Ghost, communicate these to others?⁶³ How can a baptized person who has not the faith be incorporated into the Church?⁶⁴ Certainly we cannot suspect the sincerity of the holy Bishop of Carthage; his zealous love for the Church was his sole inspiration when he developed these arguments with unexcelled earnestness. But he employed his logic overmuch in the manner of his teacher Tertullian. His first argument confuses the validity of the Sacrament with its actual efficacy. The second argument, if pushed to its ultimate conclusion, would result in the destruction of the visible Church, in the notion of an invisible Church dependent upon the internal dispositions of minister and subject. Why not extend this baptismal theory to all the other Sacraments and to all the liturgical ceremonies which have the power of giving grace? The theories of Wyclif and Zwingli were the consequence of reasoning of this sort.

With great confidence in these arguments, which he thought conclusive,⁶⁵ Cyprian assembled a council at Carthage in the autumn of 255 and succeeded in having his view approved by it. He confidently sent the decision of the council to the Church of Rome. This decision he no doubt considered a further argu-

⁶² *Letters*, LXIX, 2 f.; LXXIV, 6; LXXV, 14; LXIX, 10 f.; LXX, 3; LXXIII, 6; LXXIV, 4 f.; LXXV, 8, 12.

⁶³ *Letters*, LXIX, 8; LXX, 1 f.; LXV, 7, 9-11.

⁶⁴ Letter 73, sects. 4, 17 f.

⁶⁵ St. Cyprian, in his controversies, later sets up the African tradition in opposition to the Roman. In the present instance he takes little account of the argument from tradition. In an expression after the manner of Tertullian, he says: "*Non est de consuetudine praescribendum, sed ratione vincendum.*" (Letter 71, sects. 2 f.) Hugo Koch, a Protestant historian, in his *Cyprian und der römische Primat*, maintains that this text contains a radical denial of the Roman primacy. The context points rather to the following meaning: to be the representative of tradition and to be in the position of authority does not dispense one from the use of sound reasoning.

ment in behalf of that unity and holiness of the Church which he so heartily defended and tried to make prevail. The see of St. Peter was then occupied by Pope Stephen.

Cornelius had been exiled to Centumcellae (Cività Vecchia) in 252, and was martyred there two years later. Shortly after his death, he was succeeded by Lucius. It is not certain how long the latter's pontificate lasted. Nicephorus says he reigned six months; Eusebius says eight months. According to Cyprian, he wrote several letters on the way Christians should be treated who lapsed during the persecution;⁶⁶ but these letters are now lost. We know also that immediately after his election he was banished. St. Cyprian, learning of both events at the same time, wrote him a letter of congratulation and condolence.⁶⁷ His exile did not last long, but it led St. Cyprian to give him the title of martyr, which in this case should not be taken in the strict sense.

Pope St. Stephen

Lucius was succeeded by a Roman priest named Stephen, a charitable and peaceful man. According to the testimony of St. Dionysius of Alexandria, he maintained the ancient fame of the Roman Church by his fatherly solicitude for the spiritual needs of all, even the most distant churches. Out of a deep respect for holy things he forbade priests and deacons, says the *Liber Pontificalis*, to wear liturgical vestments outside the church. His conciliatory spirit was a contrast to that of the Bishop of Carthage, who was so quick in decision and action. As a result of this difference in character, there arose regrettable conflicts between Stephen and Cyprian.

With sometimes divergent views, but with like concern for the welfare of souls, the Roman Pontiff and the Bishop of Carthage endeavored to regulate the situation created in the

⁶⁶ St. Cyprian, Letter 67.

⁶⁷ Letter 61.

dioceses of Merida and Leon in Spain by the defection of their bishops, Basilides and Martial. These men had requested or accepted certificates of sacrifice. Cyprian was indignant at such a scandal and called upon the Pope to depose them. Stephen yielded to the sound reasoning of the Bishop of Carthage. The two Spanish bishops were declared unworthy of the episcopate. Soon after, Cyprian urgently ⁶⁸ called the Pope's attention to a quite opposite danger. The Bishop of Arles, Marcian, who had been won over to Novatianism, applied its principles strictly and refused any pardon to the lapsed. We have not Stephen's reply, but he must again have granted the justice of Cyprian's request and deposed Marcian, for the latter's name is not found in the list of the bishops of Arles.⁶⁹

The recollection of the rather sharp communications in these two matters may have influenced the Pope's attitude when Cyprian's delegates came to Rome to notify him of the decision of the Council of Carthage. This much is certain, that the messengers from Carthage were received coldly at Rome.⁷⁰ On the question of the Baptism of heretics, the Roman Church had an immemorial tradition; it is even probable that not long before an explicit papal decision had solemnly confirmed this tradition.⁷¹ We cannot suppose that the defects and dangers of Cyprian's theory were perceived by the Pope and his counselors, as we see them today after Protestantism and Jansenism, after the Council of Trent and the Council of the Vatican. After considering the arguments of the Bishop of Carthage and the decision of the African Council, the Roman Pontiff

⁶⁸ Letter 68. The letter is insistent to the point of seeming to lack respect.

⁶⁹ Tillemont, *Mémoires*, IV, art. 34 on St. Cyprian.

⁷⁰ Duchesne, *op. cit.*, I, 308. Firmilian of Caesarea, who was an ardent partisan of Cyprian and therefore under the suspicion of exaggerating, says he learned from a certain deacon, Gratianus by name, that the legates of the Bishop of Carthage were not admitted to Stephen's presence and that Cyprian was spoken of as a false prophet. (Letter 75, sec. 25.)

⁷¹ Batiffol, *op. cit.*, pp. 396 f.

merely appealed to tradition and commanded that it be followed. From the Pope's letter we have only this decisive passage: "If then any shall come to you from any heresy whatsoever, be there no innovation, beyond what has been handed down, namely, that hands be laid on such to repentance."⁷²

The tradition here appealed to by Stephen was not merely that of Rome, but also that of Alexandria and all Egypt, of Jerusalem and Palestine—in short, of the chief Catholic centers. Cyprian on his part was unable to appeal even to a unanimous practice in Africa, for, in the council of 255, the bishops of Numidia forcibly appealed to an early tradition contrary to that of Carthage.⁷³ Antioch, northern Syria, and some districts of Asia Minor followed the Carthaginian practice. At any event, the Pope, appealing to the authority which was his by virtue of his primacy,⁷⁴ ordered the Church of Carthage to follow what he judged to be the tradition.

The Pope's decision was not a dogmatic definition, but a disciplinary command to an individual church. The Bishop of Carthage protested with characteristic vehemence. While not denying the supreme authority of the Bishop of Rome, he thought that, in a matter of this sort, "each prelate hath, in the government of the Church, his own choice and free will, hereafter to give account of his conduct to the Lord."⁷⁵ Stephen's

⁷² Letter 74, sec. 1. The famous text reads as follows: "*Nihil innovetur nisi quod traditum est.*" Tillemont, Bossuet, and many others have understood the text to mean that "nothing should be repeated except what tradition intends to be repeated," i. e., that only the imposition of hands should be repeated, but not the Baptism. But this is not the interpretation that the words received from contemporaries. The Pope states a general principle: the traditional practice should be followed and, consequently, no innovation should be introduced. This is the meaning given to the passage by Eusebius (*H. E.*, VII, iii). St. Vincent of Lerins (*Commonitory*, chap. 6) understands the words in this same sense. (Cf. St. Cyprian, *Letters*, 74, sec. 2; 70, sec. 5; *De rebaptismate*, 1; see Saltet, *Les réordinations*, pp. 22-28.)

⁷³ "*Dicunt se in hoc veterem consuetudinem sequi, sed non est de consuetudine praescribendum.*" (St. Cyprian, Letter 71, sec. 2.)

⁷⁴ We learn this detail from Firmilian. Letter 75, sec. 5 (*inter Cyprianicas*).

⁷⁵ Letter 72, sec. 3.

intervention seemed to Cyprian an encroachment upon his rights. On September 1, 256, Cyprian convoked another council, attended by eighty-seven bishops. In his opening address he said: "Upon this same matter each of us should bring forward what we think, judging no man, nor rejecting anyone from the right of communion, if he should think differently from us. For neither does any of us set himself up as a bishop of bishops, nor by tyrannical terror does any compel his colleague to the necessity of obedience."⁷⁶ Should these ambiguous words be regarded as implying a recognition of the rights of the Roman Church or a thinly veiled criticism of its claims? Both interpretations have been held.⁷⁷ There was no protest against the papal authority. "Nothing was read from the correspondence of Stephen, his name was not even mentioned; and yet there was no bishop more present than he to that Council of Africa whose members were greatly disturbed by the lesson the Bishop of Rome had just given to the Bishop of Carthage. . . . One after the other, the eighty-seven bishops gave their vote and stated its grounds: they held no other doctrine than that of Cyprian.

"But at that very moment, Pope Stephen was forwarding to all the churches of Christendom the decision by which he acknowledged the validity of Baptism conferred by heretics. . . . Was the whole episcopal body to be divided into two hostile camps: on the one side, Rome and Alexandria, on the other, Africa and Asia Minor? Notwithstanding some affirmations to the contrary, Rome did not as yet excommunicate any church; but she spoke of severing relations with the churches that would not acknowledge the validity of heretical Baptism."⁷⁸

⁷⁶ See the text in Cyprian, *De baptismo haereticorum*.

⁷⁷ P. Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, p. 392; A. d'Alès, *Question baptismale*, p. 26.

⁷⁸ Batiffol, *loc. cit.*

St. Firmilian

Then appeared, against the Pope and his doctrine, the most forcible writing that was occasioned by this painful dispute. Its author was Firmilian, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, a man whose learning and virtue were praiseworthy, but who had been stirred up by the recent discussions. To his mind, the real schismatic is he who, wishing to excommunicate the Church, merely excommunicates himself from the Church. Such is the real heretic, the worst of all heretics. It was to Pope Stephen that these words were addressed.⁷⁹ The Church is hierarchical, and the Church is one, says Firmilian. The Church is hierarchical because its authority rests on that of the Apostles. They have handed down their authority to the bishops. Without the bishops there is no Baptism, no Holy Orders, no altar. But who is it that gives heretics—Core, Dathan, and Abiron—the right to confer the Holy Ghost? Who is this destroyer of the hierarchy, if not Stephen? The Church is one. The guarantee of this oneness is fidelity to the Apostolic authority. Whoever is with the Apostles, shares in this oneness, without there being need of conformity of practice in everything. Is the Easter ceremony celebrated in the same manner and at the same date in the whole Church? Is Rome, in its liturgy, in full accord with Jerusalem?

We can see the flaw in this very clever reasoning. They want the hierarchy, but are silent about the pivotal point of that hierarchy; they proclaim oneness, but forget that there must be a judge of that oneness, an arbiter in the conflicts that might break it. They speak of the baptismal question as though it were simply a matter of ceremonies, while failing to note that

⁷⁹ "*Tu haereticis omnibus peior es.*" (Letter 75, sec. 25.) On the authenticity of this letter, which Molkenbuhr questions, see Bardenhewer, *Patrology*, p. 175. Possibly some places in our present Latin text were altered by a Donatist. On St. Firmilian, see Tillemont, *Mémoires*, vol. IV, *passim*.

it touches on higher questions, which the Pope has the right to decide.

Furthermore, while the Pope was only propounding his right and duty to interpret the Catholic traditions, certain polemics arose to defend his cause. Among them was the author of the *Liber de rebaptismate*, a suggestive work, although its ideas are somewhat confused and not well arrayed.⁸⁰ He examines the theological aspect of the baptismal question and insists particularly upon the power of the divine names invoked in the baptismal formula, a power that is exercised independently of the faith or official rank of the minister. He has a glimpse of the difference between the validity and the efficacy of Baptism, and thus destroys the basic argument of the rebaptizers, namely, that a heretic as such cannot give or receive the Holy Ghost. He says we must distinguish between the immersion and the virtue of the immersion. These two things can be separated; one can be without the other. The immersion made in the name of the Trinity, even by a heretic, has the power of giving an indelible character and hence does not need to be renewed. As to the virtue of the immersion, that will be produced when the heretic is converted to the true Church.

The Pope, notwithstanding the sharpness of the attacks made upon his decision, had the forbearance not to excommunicate anyone. A great misunderstanding was at the root of these heated disputes and divided men whose devotion to the Church no one could question. Stephen and Cyprian soon showed this by generously giving, both of them, their lives for the faith. And the voice of moderation was heard. As Irenaeus had done in the midst of the disputes over the Easter question, Dionysius of Alexandria became the advocate of pacification with Stephen. After that Pope's martyrdom, Dio-

⁸⁰ An analysis of this work will be found in Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne*, II, 94 ff.

nysius continued his efforts for peace with Sixtus II. Sixtus and Cyprian renewed their interrupted relations. The Bishop of Caesarea, Firmilian, likewise resumed relations with Rome. At the end of the third century, all Africa had joined in the Roman practice. There was a more prolonged hesitation in the East; but there, too, the traditional practice finally triumphed, as did also the authority of the Roman pontiff.⁸¹

The Plague

The persecution of the Christians under Gallus and Valerian contributed not a little to restore union to the Church. That we may grasp this the better, we must resume our interrupted narrative of the events.

A plague which decimated Rome and the provinces under Emperor Gallus, gave rise to new severity toward the Christians. In the midst of universal terror, of selfishness and pagan cowardice,⁸² they alone gave an example of true charity. St. Dionysius of Alexandria tells of their caring for the sick, closing the eyes of the dead, bathing the bodies of the deceased, and themselves becoming victims of their devotion, "so that this form of death appeared nowise inferior to martyrdom itself."⁸³ St. Cyprian bears the same testimony in his *De*

⁸¹ Anglicans, Gallicans, Josephists, and, more recently, the Old Catholics, have frequently quoted the violent words of St. Cyprian and St. Firmilian in the baptismal dispute as a confirmation of their errors. But they lose sight of the fact that, outside the crises in which certain difficult circumstances created a painful misunderstanding between Rome and Cyprian, the latter recognized that "the Church of this see had become the mother and root of the Catholic Church spread over the earth. In a severe crisis which Cyprian had to pass through in his own diocese, he appealed to the Roman Church (the Roman bishop) in a manner which made it appear as if communion with that Church was in itself the guaranty of truth." (Harnack, *History of Dogma*, II, 88.) For Cyprian, the See of Rome was always *locus Petri*, and the Church of Rome was "*Ecclesia principalis, unde unitas sacerdotalis exorta est.*"

⁸² St. Cyprian, *De mortalitate*, 16; Pontius, *Vita Cypriani*, 97; Eusebius, *H. E.*, VII, xxii.

⁸³ Quoted by Eusebius, *H. E.*, VII, xxii,

mortalitate; but he considers the plague as a means of detaching Christians from the present life and preparing them for the conflicts to come.⁸⁴

The valiant Bishop's anticipation was soon realized. Gallus, desiring to assuage the wrath of the gods, ordered propitiatory sacrifices to be offered in every city. The Christians were prevented by their faith from taking part in these idolatrous acts. Then it was that Gallus arrested the Bishop of Rome, Pope Cornelius, no doubt hoping thus to terrify the Christians and to witness a repetition of the apostasies in the time of Decius. But he was greatly mistaken. Scarcely did the news of the outrage spread abroad, than the Christians hastened in throngs to confess their faith and declare themselves ready to die.⁸⁵ A large number of those who had lapsed in the preceding persecution sought to rehabilitate themselves by heroic professions of faith before the magistrates, and several suffered death. The Emperor felt that too great rigor toward the Pope would but enkindle the enthusiasm. Therefore, he merely banished Cornelius to Centumcellae, where the Pontiff died; and he also exiled Cornelius' successor, Lucius, immediately after his election.

The Emperor Valerian

During the two years of Gallus' persecution, defections were few. The efforts of Cornelius, Cyprian, and Dionysius of Alexandria had borne fruit. Those who were real Christians during the peace showed themselves real martyrs in time of trial.

Upon Valerian's coming to the throne, the Church joined in the unanimous acclaim of the Roman people in hailing this honest man, honored both in civil life and in the army, a valiant general who had defended the Empire on every fron-

⁸⁴ St. Cyprian, *De mortalitate*, 15.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

tier, and—a rare exception in those times—had come to the throne without staining his hands with the blood of his predecessor.

One of the new Emperor's first acts was to recall the Pope from exile. Lucius returned to Rome in triumph. St. Cyprian describes the ovation given him in the streets of the Eternal City.⁸⁶ Lucius died in Rome shortly afterwards, March 5, 254. It may be that the sufferings of his banishment hastened his death. St. Cyprian gives him the title of martyr, as he does Cornelius.⁸⁷

At first Valerian showed great friendliness to the Christians. Dionysius of Alexandria says: "How kind and friendly he was towards the servants of God. For never was there any of the emperors before him so favorably and benevolently disposed toward them, not even those who were openly said to be Christians, so plainly received them, with such excessive civility and friendship in the commencement of his reign. All his house was likewise filled with pious persons, and was like a church of God."⁸⁸

The Church profited by this peace to heal the wounds inflicted by persecution and schism and the calamities of the times. Here and there traces of the old heresies still troubled the purity of the faith. Some who were more or less consciously the heirs of Gnosticism celebrated Mass without wine; they were called *Aquarii*. Their excuse was that during the persecution the odor of the wine taken in the morning would betray them before the pagans. Cyprian refuted their error and shamed them for their timidity.⁸⁹ Others, imbued with Judaic traditions, waited until the eighth day to confer Baptism on their children, as the Jews did for circumcision, and

⁸⁶ Letter 58.

⁸⁷ Letter 67.

⁸⁸ St. Dionysius of Alexandria, Letter to Hermammon, quoted by Eusebius, *H. E.*, VII, x.

⁸⁹ Letter. 63.

they would not give any signs of affection for their children until these had been cleansed of original sin. Cyprian condemned their superstition.

The poor were in great numbers. Persecution, the plague, and, above all other causes, the progressive decadence of the Roman world under the influence of pagan corruption and military despotism, were making labor more unproductive, wealth less abundant, and poverty more frequent and beyond cure.⁹⁰ To combat this evil, Cyprian wrote his beautiful book *On Works and Almsgiving*. The Bishop of Carthage preached both by word and example. Certain bishops of Numidia wrote asking him for contributions for the redemption of captives. A collection taken up among the clergy and people of Carthage amounted to 100,000 sesterces (about \$5,000). Cyprian immediately forwarded this magnificent gift to his colleagues.⁹¹ From Rome, where Pope Cornelius had fed 1,500 poor persons,⁹² Pope Stephen sent relief to the Churches of Syria and Arabia.⁹³ The enemies of the Church turned these very deeds of generosity into an excuse for a new persecution.

A defect of major importance in any ruler is a ready yielding to the influence of those about him. And this was one of Emperor Valerian's faults.⁹⁴ It became more conspicuous as he grew older. A certain Macrianus, an ambitious soldier who reached the loftiest offices of the Empire, won the Emperor's confidence, diverted his friendliness from Christianity by introducing him to magic,⁹⁵ and gained a powerful ascendancy over him. Then he denounced the Church as the great peril of the Empire. In the case of an emperor who, like Valerian, had

⁹⁰ Champagny, *Les Césars du III^e siècle*, II, 381.

⁹¹ Letter 60.

⁹² Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, xliii.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, VII, v.

⁹⁴ Aurelius Victor says he was "*multum iners*." (*Epitome*; cf. Zosimus, *Historiae*, bk. 1, chap 36.)

⁹⁵ Magic was the last relic of paganism. The writings of the Fathers of the second, third, and fourth centuries abound in allusions to magical practices.

a close acquaintance with Christians, their mysteries, their practices, and their spirit, it was no longer possible to make false charges of infamous doings at their meetings, as had been done under Nero and Domitian, or to suggest the menacing influence of their spread, as under Septimius Severus, or their systematic hostility toward the Empire, as under Decius. Macrianus spoke only of the wealth of the Church, of the extent of its properties, of the vastness of its treasures that must be concealed in the shadow of its sanctuaries, since it supplied such abundant alms. He failed to understand, or rather he pretended not to understand, that the Church did not hoard up treasure, that, as St. Cyprian said, "whatever is given is bestowed on widows and orphans,"⁹⁶ that the church buildings and cemeteries, however extensive they seemed, were unproductive capital, that the font of all the Church's resources was in the generous hearts of its members, ever ready to come to the relief of their brethren in distress, and not in chests from which they could be stolen. From that time onward the old Emperor's imagination was obsessed by the vision of a Church storing up treasures in its temples, while the coffers of the State were empty. Instead of attributing the deplorable financial condition of the Empire to economic and moral causes, which a little close attention would have revealed—slavery, the poor organization of labor, the unjust distribution of wealth, the unproductive consumption of income, the moral disorders that encouraged both the indolent distrust of the workers and the insolent luxury of the masters—Macrianus drew the Emperor's attention to a powerful society that was absorbing wealth, depriving the State of it, and bringing on public ruination. By talking thus, the clever schemer not only gratified a personal grudge, but also echoed the popular rumors exploited by the pagans.

⁹⁶ *De opere et eleemosynis*, 12; Library of the Fathers, III, 241.

Valerian's Edicts of Persecution

These charges resulted in two edicts of persecution in 257 and 258. Neither of them was directed against Christians as individuals so much as against the Christian Church. No one was required to apostatize. The first decree merely enjoined upon the hierarchical heads of the Church to join officially in the worship of the gods, although, if they so wished, they might continue their worship of Christ, and to abandon the collegiate form of church organization. At first glance these two prescriptions may seem comparatively mild. But, in fact, "no previous persecutor had adopted so grievous a measure against the Church."⁹⁷ It attacked both the hierarchy and the social form of the Church. Without running the risk of a popular uprising and without even requiring the heads of the Church to abjure their belief, it merely called upon the latter to join in the national worship, while it dissolved all the corporate bonds which had held the Christians together. After that it would matter but little if the faithful did not offer incense to the Roman gods and if they continued to exist merely as groups of individuals. This they could do, but cut off from their chiefs and deprived of their possessions. The Christian Church, thus stricken in its head and foundation, would inevitably dissolve and cease to be.

The situation was especially serious because of the terrible penalties which the old Roman law attached to prescriptions of this sort and because of a new legal procedure which increased their severity.

According to the letter of the law, every crime of impiety, that is, every refusal to honor the gods of the State, was punishable with exile. Thus, whether they obeyed the law or

⁹⁷ Allard, *Les dernières persécutions du troisième siècle*, p. 54. (See Healy, *The Valerian Persecution*. Tr.)

defied it, the priests and bishops would perforce be separated from their flocks: in the one case, by their act of idolatry; in the other case, by their banishment beyond the frontiers.

Even more radical were the penalties attached to the laws about associations. The Roman law, with its centralized absolutism, punished any attempt to found or reestablish a forbidden society as equivalent to the crime of a robber who by armed force seizes upon temples or public buildings.⁹⁸ Since, in this pagan theocracy, every public institution possessed both a religious and a political character, the punishment of this crime became that of lese majesty, almost identical with sacrilege⁹⁹ and punishable by death.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, in a hidden and indirect, but terribly effective manner, the edict of 257, with its appearance of ignoring the laity, really was an attack upon them: a layman frequenting a cemetery or holding a religious meeting became liable to capital punishment, which, in Roman law, was of two degrees: death or forced labor.¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, this first decree did not have the effect anticipated. It aimed at the chiefs of the Church—Stephen, Cyprian, and Dionysius. They were the first to suffer, but their courage strengthened the faithful. We are not in possession of the details of Pope Stephen's death; probably he was banished straightway after the promulgation of the decree; he died soon afterwards in exile and received from the Church the title of martyr.¹⁰² The Bishop of Carthage was banished to Curubis in Africa, and the Bishop of Alexandria to Kephro in Libya. But both of them maintained communication with

⁹⁸ "*Quisquis illicitum collegium usurpaverit, ea poena tenetur, qua tenentur qui hominibus armatis loca publica vel templa occupasse judicati sunt.*" (Ulpian, *Digest*, XLVII, xxii, 1.)

⁹⁹ "*Proximum sacrilegio crimen est, quod majestatis dicitur.*" (*Ibidem*, XLVIII, iv, 1.)

¹⁰⁰ Marcian, *ibid.*, no. 3.

¹⁰¹ Callistratus, *Digest*, XLVIII, xix, 28.

¹⁰² De Rossi, *Roma sotterranea*, II, 80-87; Duchesne, *Lib. pont.*, I, xcvi and 154, note.

their colleagues, who continued to hold religious meetings. The authorities did not venture to attack all the bishops. It was thought sufficient, by way of example, to arrest a number of bishops, priests, and laymen for holding illegal meetings and to sentence them to forced labor in the mines.

The government seized the cemeteries and places of worship and placed guards at their entrances. But the Christians were still able to enter without being detected. In the time of Septimius Severus they had provided the catacombs of Calistus with secret passages. These were now increased in number. These passages in the underground burying-places, intended to baffle pursuit, can still be seen. They probably date from the time of Valerian. Of course the Christians were running considerable risk.¹⁰³ In a crypt on the Via Salaria some Christians holding a liturgical meeting were discovered by soldiers, who quickly blocked the entrance to the cavern with stones and earth. After the peace of the Church, the skeletons of these Christians were found, as also the silver vessels that had been used in the Eucharistic sacrifice.¹⁰⁴ Pope Damasus, when restoring the catacomb, did not disturb these venerable relics, but simply made a little window in the wall so that pilgrims might venerate the remains of these martyrs of the Holy Eucharist. St. Gregory of Tours says that they could still be seen in his time.¹⁰⁵

Probably to this same period belongs the episode of another martyr of the Eucharist, the acolyte St. Tarsicius, who was attached to the service of one of the Roman catacombs. While bearing the sacred species, which had been consecrated in the crypt, to some Christian home, he was seized by soldiers, who ordered him to hand over what he carried. As Pope Damasus' charming inscription says, "he refused to give up to the dogs

¹⁰³ De Rossi, *op. cit.*, II, 258.

¹⁰⁴ *Acta sanctorum*, October, X, 483.

¹⁰⁵ *De gloria martyrum*, I, 38.

the body of Christ," and the soldiers clubbed him to death, while he pressed to his heart the sacred pyx holding the body of the Lord.¹⁰⁶

The imperial government had been unable to sequester all the cemeteries and places of worship; many of them belonged to Christians of high rank, who placed them at the use of their brethren. Two reasons hindered the effectiveness of the edict of 257: the courage of the heads of the churches, and the many connections they had with persons in high places, even in Caesar's very palace. To terrify the priests by more frightful penalties and to paralyze the influence of their powerful protectors, was the purpose of the edict of 258. Bishops, priests, and deacons, instead of being subject to banishment, could now be executed without examination or regular trial or substantiated charges. Senators, knights, and other members of the nobility, if they continued to profess Christianity, were to be at once deprived of their rank and fortune, and beheaded. The Christians of Caesar's household would thus see their wealth confiscated and themselves reduced to the condition of the lowest slaves.¹⁰⁷

The imperial chancery sent copies of the edict to the governors of the various provinces. The persecution broke out anew in all parts of the Empire. Pope St. Sixtus and his deacon St. Lawrence in Rome, St. Cyprian in Carthage, and St. Fructuosus in Spain were the principal victims.

Pope St. Sixtus II

Pope Stephen was succeeded by Sixtus II. Pontianus, the author of the Life of St. Cyprian, calls him "a good and peace-

¹⁰⁶ The following is the epitaph composed by St. Damasus:

*"Tarsicium sanctum Christi membra gerentem
Cum malesana manus premeret vulgare profanis,
Ipse animam potius voluit dimittere caesus
Prodere quam canibus rabidis coelestia membra."*

¹⁰⁷ St. Cyprian, Letter 80.

making pontiff.”¹⁰⁸ We have no reliable information about his pontificate except what he did to end the baptismal dispute and to resume correspondence between the Holy See and the Bishop of Carthage.

The police lost no time in hunting for the Bishop of Rome. “Sixtus II had not discontinued the holding of Christian meetings and the celebration of Christian worship. But he was unable to assemble the faithful in the cemetery of Callistus, which was officially known to the government authorities as the corporate property of the Church, and was watched by the police. On the sixth of August he offered the Holy Sacrifice on the other side of the Via Appia, in one of the underground chapels of the cemetery of Praetextatus. This cemetery was probably not yet part of the ecclesiastical domain. Being private property, it escaped sequestration. However, the inviolability of “religious places” did not hold against the new prescriptions, which ordered the immediate seizure of the bishop and his clergy. The cemetery was entered. When the soldiers came in, Sixtus was seated in his chair, addressing the faithful. He and the ministers of worship were led away. The Christians present asked to die with him; but the soldiers, satisfied with their important capture or fearing to encumber themselves with so large a number of prisoners, did not lay hands on the laity. St. Cyprian says that the prefects (of the pretorium or of the city) were in permanent session to judge the Christians. Before one of these Sixtus was brought, and was sentenced to be beheaded in the very place where he had been seized while celebrating the holy mysteries.

“While Sixtus was being led back, the first deacon, Lawrence, who was not present at the time of the arrest, ran up to his spiritual father to bid him a last farewell. Tradition reports this tender dialogue between them: ‘Father, where goest thou without thy son? Where goest thou, O priest, without

¹⁰⁸ Pontius, *Life of St. Cyprian*, 14; cf. Eusebius, *H. E.*, VII, ix.

thy deacon?' asked Lawrence in a tone of mild reproach. The Pontiff replied: 'Son, I am not abandoning thee. Greater strife awaits thee. Do not weep; thou wilt follow me in three days.' Lawrence might have been arrested at once; but the persecutors, for some hidden reason, seemed not to see him. Having reached the cemetery, they went down to the very crypt where Sixtus had preached the word of life. He sat down for the last time in his chair and offered his head to the executioner's sword. Greater than that emperor who wished to die standing, he received the mortal blow as a bishop, in the seat of the pontiffs, presiding over the persecuted Church."¹⁰⁹

The reason why they had not immediately executed Lawrence, the first deacon, soon became evident. They hoped through him to lay hands upon the supposed treasures of the Church, which they thought were in his care. The prefect of Rome sent for him and ordered him to surrender the possessions that he was keeping. The deacon, anticipating a confiscation, had already given all the Church's reserve funds to the poor. He asked to be given one day before answering. "The next day he returned, accompanied by the poor who were fed by the Christians. 'Here are the treasures of the Church,' he said. The prefect took offense at this spiritual and heroic reply. He sentenced Lawrence to be burnt alive. The martyr was stretched out on a gridiron. As he was undergoing the torture of a slow fire, the persecutors tried to wring from him, before he should die, information as to the location of the wealth of the Church. It is related that Lawrence said to the judge: 'This side is roasted enough, turn me over'; then adding:

¹⁰⁹ Allard, *op. cit.*, p. 85. Cf. Duchesne, *Lib. pont.*, I, 155 f., notes. It has been possible to reconstruct the story of St. Sixtus' martyrdom and burial by bringing together St. Cyprian's testimony (Letter 80), St. Damasus' inscription on the tomb of St. Sixtus, his inscription on the tomb of SS. Felicissimus and Agapitus, and a passage in the *De officiis ministrorum* (bk. 1, chap. 41) of St. Ambrose.

‘Taste now.’ The brave deacon raised his eyes to Heaven, and died while praying for Rome.” ¹¹⁰

Martyrdom of St. Cyprian

Soon after these events, Cyprian was arrested on a charge of being sacrilegious, a conspirator, and an abettor of an illegal association. The previous year, at Curubis, a mysterious vision foretold his martyrdom ¹¹¹ and brought him great joy. His flight, for which his foes charged him with cowardice and which he had accepted as a duty, was the most painful sacrifice for him. The genuine sentiments of his soul were revealed in that fervent *Letter to the Confessors and Martyrs*, which he wrote in the midst of the persecution. In it he says:

“With what praises shall I extol you, most valiant brethren? You yielded not to suffering, but suffering rather yielded to you. The crowd of bystanders witnessed wondering the heavenly conflict, the conflict of God, the spiritual conflict, the battle of Christ; that His servants stood, of secular weapons indeed naked, but armed and trustful in the armor of faith. . . . What a spectacle was that to the eyes of God! As it is written in the Psalms, the Holy Ghost speaking to us: ‘Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.’ Precious is this death, which purchases immortality at the price of its own blood. How did Christ rejoice there, how gladly in such His servants did He both fight and conquer. The champions and maintainers of His own name He uplifted, strengthened, animated. And He who once overcame death for us, ever overcomes it in us.” ¹¹²

On September 14, 258, Cyprian at length had an opportunity to confess his faith before the persecutors in his own city of

¹¹⁰ Allard, *op. cit.*, pp. 91 f. Historical criticism has attacked the details of this martyrdom; but no well-founded doubt has been cast upon the substantial truthfulness of the account.

¹¹¹ Pontius, *op. cit.*, 12.

¹¹² St. Cyprian, *Letter to the Martyrs and Confessors*.

Carthage. The official record of his trial and execution have come down to us without alteration. We quote this priceless document as follows: ¹¹³

"The proconsul Galerius Maximus said: 'Art thou Thascius Cyprian?' Cyprian answered: 'I am.' 'Art thou he,' said Maximus, 'who hath borne the highest offices of their religion among the Christians?' 'Yes,' answered the Bishop. 'The most sacred Emperors have commanded that you offer sacrifice,' said the proconsul. 'I will not offer sacrifice,' replied Cyprian. 'Be persuaded,' said the proconsul, 'for your own sake.' Cyprian replied: 'Do thou as thou hast received orders: for me, in so just a cause, no persuasion can move me.'

"Maximus, having consulted with his assessors, pronounced the following sentence with much emotion: 'Thou hast long lived in impiety, and hast made thyself the center of a band of pestilent conspirators; thou hast acted as an enemy to the gods and to the sacred laws of Rome: neither the pious and most august princes Valerianus and Gallienus, nor the most noble Caesar Valerian, have been able to recall you to a dutiful adherence to their religion. Since, then, thou art convicted as the author and instigator of so many iniquities, thou shalt become an example to those whom thou hast seduced: the authority of the laws shall be vindicated by thy blood.' After these words he pronounced the sentence from his tablet, 'Let Thascius Cyprian be beheaded.' 'Thanks be to God,' said Cyprian: and the crowd of Christians who surrounded him, exclaimed, 'Let us die with him!'

"The holy martyr was then led away, followed by a great concourse of people, to an open field near the place where he had received his sentence; and having put off the rest of his garments, and committed them to the deacons, he first prostrated himself in prayer to God, and then stood in his inner vestments prepared for the fatal stroke. He tied the bandage over his eyes with his own hands; and that he might

¹¹³ There is every reason for us to believe that this document is not merely a composite of ancient materials, as Basnage and Goerres have maintained, but—as Allard and Leclercq think—the official report of the trial, copied by the Christians. (Cf. Cabrol, art. "*Actes des martyrs*," in the *Dict. de litt. et d'archéol. chrét.*)

owe that office to friends which he could not himself perform, Julian a presbyter, and a subdeacon of the same name, bound his hands. To the executioner he appropriated a gift of twenty-five pieces of gold: the Christians, whose avarice was not mercenary, sought no other memorials than handkerchiefs dyed with the blood of their bishop."¹¹⁴

Many other bishops and priests also died for the faith in Africa, Asia, at Rome, in Gaul, and in Spain. We have not the authentic Acts of all these martyrs. Those of St. Fructuosus, bishop of Tarragona, and of his two deacons, Augurius and Eulogius, seem to be almost contemporary with the events they relate.¹¹⁵

Martyrdom of St. Fructuosus

Aemilianus, the governor, said to Fructuosus: "Do you know the commands of the Emperor?"

Fructuosus: "No, but I am a Christian."

Aemilianus: "Do you know that there are gods?"

Fructuosus: "I know nothing of the sort."

Aemilianus: "You will learn."

Fructuosus raised his eyes to Heaven and prayed.

Aemilianus: "Who, then, will be obeyed, feared, and honored, if people refuse to worship the gods and adore the emperors?"

Aemilianus (to Augurius): "Do not listen to what Fructuosus says."

Augurius: "I adore the almighty God."

Aemilianus (to Eulogius): "Do you adore Fructuosus?"

Eulogius: "I do not adore Fructuosus, but I adore the same God that Fructuosus adores."

Aemilianus (to Fructuosus): "Are you a bishop?"

Fructuosus: "I am."

Aemilianus: "You have been."

And he ordered all three to be burnt alive.

"When the three martyrs walked to the place of their execution

¹¹⁴ Leclercq, *Les Martyrs*, II, 105; cf. Monceaux, *St. Cyprian*.

¹¹⁵ Allard, *Histoire des pers.*, III, 98 ff.

in the amphitheater, they seemed like the three Hebrews, and like these made one think of the Trinity. When the flames had burnt the cords that tied their hands, they knelt down and ceased not to pray until the moment they gave up their spirit.”¹¹⁶

These events took place on January 21, 259. The next year Emperor Valerian, having been made prisoner by King Sapor, walked behind his conqueror's chariot in chains. He was now himself a slave. For many years he continued to drag out a wretched and degraded existence among the Persians.

The Emperor Gallienus

The lesson was profitable to his son Gallienus, who knew that the Christian society was so deeply rooted and so widely extended that there was no hope of destroying it or of absorbing it in the imperial government. It may be that the influence of Salonina, his wife, who probably was a Christian,¹¹⁷ inclined him favorably toward Christianity.

Gallienus put an end to the persecution and restored to the Christians all their possessions that had been confiscated. It is particularly noteworthy that he regulated all these matters with the heads of the Churches. We still have his letter to Dionysius of Alexandria on this subject.¹¹⁸ This procedure was an official recognition of the hierarchical authority of the

¹¹⁶ Leclercq, *op. cit.*, II, 118 ff.

¹¹⁷ The Empress Salonina was a remarkably interesting character. Though of Roman stock, she seemed to belong to the intellectual lineage of those Syrian princesses—such as Julia Domna and Mammaea—who exercised so dominant an influence at the court of Severus. She was enthusiastically devoted to Greek studies, especially philosophy, and at first was in touch with Plotinus and Porphyry. Whereas the latter turned bitterly against the Christians, and Plotinus introduced into his *Enneades* merely a vague coloring of the Gospel, it may be that Salonina even became a Christian. Allard and De Witte favor the view that she did. De Barthélemy, Kraus, and Drury believe that she did not go beyond a compromise between Christianity and Neoplatonism; but they also think that she inclined Gallienus to treat the Christians favorably.

¹¹⁸ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VII, xiii.

bishops. His successor Aurelian went even farther and in the matter of a property dispute on which, in 272, the Christians of Antioch were divided, he "ordered the building to be given up to those to whom the rulers of the Christian religion in Italy and the bishop of Rome should write."¹¹⁹ One step more, and Church and State would treat with each other for the first time as one power with another. A religious policy was being prepared which led to the edict of Constantine.

But Gallienus' weakness prevented his decree from bearing its full fruit. "While he was saying at Rome: 'Let us amuse ourselves,' he was losing the government of the world."¹²⁰ Ambitious soldiers carved out ephemeral kingdoms for themselves in the provinces. Gaul, Britain, and Spain were grouped under the independent rule of Posthumus; in the East a powerful confederation was formed under Odenatus and Zenobia; Egypt and the Danube provinces submitted to new masters. It was the era of the "Thirty Tyrants."¹²¹ Of these only one, Macrianus, showed himself plainly hostile to the Christians, but he was unable to destroy the great influence which they had acquired by their knowledge and virtue and which, in moments of danger, made them powerful mediators. We have an example of this in an episode reported by Eusebius. While the Roman legions were besieging Alexandria, two highly regarded and eminent Christians—Eusebius, later bishop of Laodicea, and Anatolius, who followed him in the same see—mediated between the Romans and the Alexandrians, and thus saved a large number of the besieged from death.¹²²

During the more than thirty years, from 260 to 295, there

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*, VII, xxx.

¹²⁰ Trebellius Pollio, *Gallieni duo*, 16, 17, 21.

¹²¹ These ephemeral kings, most of them former imperial officers, who governed according to Roman traditions, were not thirty in number, nor were they more tyrannical than the Roman emperors. But they are known as the "Thirty Tyrants."

¹²² Eusebius, *H. E.*, VII, xxxii.

were three short and localized persecutions: the one in Egypt under Macrianus; another in 269 under Claudius Gothicus; and the one that was decreed by Aurelian in 274, which, however, ended with his death. With these exceptions, the Christians enjoyed comparative peace during this period.

Pope Dionysius

This peace gave the Church a chance for reorganization. The see of St. Peter was vacant for a whole year after the death of Sixtus II. In July, 259, the Roman clergy elected Dionysius.

The new pontiff was united by ties of friendship to that other Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria. But when the latter was denounced to the Pope for his unorthodox way of speaking of the Trinity, the Pope asked him for an explanation. Dionysius of Alexandria at once withdrew the expressions that had given scandal to the faithful.¹²³ Pope Dionysius, in his own name and in the name of a synod which he had assembled in Rome to elucidate the Trinitarian question, wrote a circular letter to all the churches of Egypt, in which, while preserving a middle course between the two extremes, he condemned Sabellian Unitarianism and subordinationian Tritheism.¹²⁴ He wrote also to the Church of Caesarea in Capadocia, which was afflicted by the invasion of the Persians; and he sent it aid for the redemption of the captives. His letter, as St. Basil testifies, was respectfully preserved in the archives of Caesarea. This act of charity, following upon the recent strained relations between Bishop Firmilian of Caesarea and the predecessors of Dionysius, was of a sort to strengthen the union of the Eastern churches with Rome. It was under the pontificate of Dionysius that Aurelian, having to decide the ownership of certain ecclesiastical property be-

¹²³ St. Athanasius, *De sententia Dionysii*, 13; *De synodis*, 43.

¹²⁴ *Idem*, *De decretis Nicaenae synodi*, 26.

tween two claimants, ordered that it belonged to the one who was in communion with the bishop of Rome. For these various reasons, Dionysius' pontificate marks an important date in the history of the Holy See.

Popes Felix, Eutychian, and Caius

The next pope, Felix, governed the Church for five years, worthily continuing the work of Dionysius. His important letter on Christ's perfect divinity and humanity was later deemed worthy of being incorporated, in large part, in the Acts of the Third Ecumenical Council.

We know almost nothing about Eutychian and Caius, who were the two successors of Felix. The records of their pontificates must have been destroyed in the persecution of Diocletian. According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, Eutychian reigned eight years, eleven months, and three days, but these figures do not agree with those of Eusebius, who speaks of only ten months, or with the Corbie catalogue, which gives him one year and one month.

A similar divergence is to be found between the *Liber Pontificalis* and Eusebius regarding the pontificate of Pope Caius. The former authority gives him a reign of thirteen years; Eusebius, fifteen. The *Passio Sanctae Suzannae*—which, however, is not altogether reliable—gives some reason for supposing that Caius was a relative of Diocletian.

Organization of the Church

During the thirty-odd years of peace which Providence granted the Church, its rulers had two important works to undertake: to restore and consolidate discipline, and to defend the purity of the faith against paganism and heresy.

The second part of the third century saw the strengthening and completion of the hierarchy: the authority of the priest-

hood and episcopate, and most of all the authority of the Roman pontificate, was a matter demanding the attention of the civil government. Beneath these higher grades of the traditional organization, a certain number of lower orders appeared.

The Emperor Gallienus treated of these religious questions with the bishops; Aurelian would recognize as legitimate bishops only those who were in union with Rome. A passage in the *Liber Pontificalis* speaks of Pope Dionysius handing over to the priests the churches which the government had given back.¹²⁵ And we find it said that Pope Cornelius enumerated, among the ministers of his Church, deacons, subdeacons, acolytes, exorcists, lectors, and porters.¹²⁶ From this time forth these are the various grades of the hierarchy. This is what Tertullian and Cyprian call the *ordo*, the *clerus*,¹²⁷ as distinguished from the *plebs* of the faithful. Other texts enable us to enter into more detail regarding the nature and functioning of this hierarchy.

The bishop of Rome's supreme authority is evident from a consideration of the controversies which we have already recounted. Never did Cyprian or Firmilian or Dionysius of Alexandria venture to speak authoritatively to the whole Church. Only the bishops of Rome did so. Scholars stir up questions; the bishop of Rome decides them. In the excitement of the discussion he is sometimes charged with abusing his authority, but that authority itself is never called in question.

Yet each bishop, as head of a local church, has a great power. He alone represents the Apostolic tradition before the people; he alone represents his faithful people in their relations with the other churches or with Rome. No letter is ad-

¹²⁵ *Lib. pont.*, I, 157; cf. Introduction, page c.

¹²⁶ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, xliii.

¹²⁷ Tertullian, *De monogamia*. 11 f.; St. Cyprian, *Letters*, 40, 58.

dressed to the clergy unless the see is vacant. At times we meet the phrase, "the bishop and his people": these are the two elements of a church.¹²⁸

Three factors enter into the election of a bishop: the votes of the faithful of the church that is to be provided with a bishop; the vote of the clergy, and, lastly, the confirmation of this choice by the neighboring bishops, who impose hands on the bishop-elect. It is clear that this last act is the essential condition; it is this which "gives the episcopacy."¹²⁹ Novatian had three poor, ignorant and beguiled bishops impose hands on him; the only reason why Pope Cornelius would not recognize his election was because the three bishops were intoxicated and had acted under the influence of fraud and terror. Novatian's conduct as well as the Pope's words presuppose, as an accepted truth, that the imposition of hands by three bishops confers the episcopacy.¹³⁰

The special office of priests is to offer the sacrifice. Tertulian is as positive on this point as Cyprian. Whereas in the earliest period the priests stood around the bishop, who was the chief officiant, now they often celebrate the sacrifice by themselves. And churches are placed in their charge.¹³¹ Their second function is to catechize. First they teach the catechumens, the *audientes*, then the faithful, who come to them for a knowledge of the faith.¹³² In fine, they administer the Sacrament of Penance insofar as it is a private matter. In all these duties they are closely dependent upon the bishop, whose helpers they are. In the East only, they sometimes have charge of a few rural communities, and are then called "rectors of the people," or "*chorepiscopi*," country bishops.¹³³

¹²⁸ St. Cyprian, Letter 58, sect. 4.

¹²⁹ *Idem*, Letter 67, sec. 5.

¹³⁰ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, xliii.

¹³¹ *Lib. pont.*, I, 157.

¹³² St. Cyprian, *Letters*, 18, sec. 2; 29; 63, sec. 3; Pontius, *Life of St. Cyprian*, 3 f.

¹³³ Gillmann, *Das Institut der Chorbischöfe im Orient*, Munich, 1903.

The Eastern *chorepiscopi* of the third century seem in principle to have had episcopal powers. The Council of Sardica, in 343, forbade the granting of these powers. Thereafter the *chorepiscopi* were merely priest "visitors" or inspectors, at times a sort of resident pastors, but always under the authority of the bishop. In the West the institution of *chorepiscopi* came later. It is in the fifth century that for the first time in the West this title is given to two priests, Armentarius at Riez and Eugraphus in Dalmatia. But its meaning is not very clear; it does not become so until the eighth century.¹³⁴

The deacons were always of great importance in the Church. The development of the Church, the increasing number of meetings, and the growth of the ecclesiastical patrimony considerably added to the variety of their duties. The creation of minor orders relieved them of many of their occupations. But the management of Church property and the direction of the works of charity were sometimes a heavy burden. Among the deacons, one, who is called first or archdeacon, had principal charge of the Church possessions and the works of zeal. We have seen how these duties affected the first deacon, Lawrence.

¹³⁴ The history of the *chorepiscopi* can be studied only by carefully distinguishing the Eastern chorepiscopate from the Western. They differ both in the period when they existed and in their special traits. In the East the chorepiscopate existed from the second to the eighth century. The earliest *chorepiscopus* of whom we know in the East was Zoticus, who was *chorepiscopus* of Cumana (Phrygia) in the latter half of the second century. The latest mention of *chorepiscopi* is in the report of the Council of Nicaea in 787. Except for the enigmatic case of Armentarius and Eugraphus in Dalmatia, *chorepiscopi* are not mentioned in the West before the second half of the eighth century. In the East the *chorepiscopi* were at first rural bishops, entirely independent of the city bishops. They became more and more subject to the latter, until finally they no longer had any episcopal character at all. The regulating of their progressive subordination was the work of the councils of Ancyra, Neocaesarea, Nicaea, Antioch, Sardis, and Laodicea. The Western *chorepiscopi* "appear to be rather coadjutors of the bishop, entrusted with governing portions of the diocese more or less distant from the episcopal city, to which they remain attached; they have the episcopal dignity, but depend upon the city bishop, and are merely his auxiliaries." (Zeilier, in the *Revue d'hist. ecclési.*, 1906, p. 87; cf. Bergère, *Etude historique sur les chorévêques*, Paris. 1905.)

The same seems to have been true at Carthage¹³⁵ and Alexandria.¹³⁶

Subdeacons (*hypodiaconi*) appeared at the same time in Rome under Pope Cornelius,¹³⁷ and at Carthage under the episcopate of St. Cyprian.¹³⁸ In 251 the Church of Rome counted 46 priests, 7 deacons, 7 subdeacons, 42 acolytes, 52 exorcists, lectors, and porters.¹³⁹ St. Cyprian's letters mention the existence in Africa at this period of all these lower orders, except that of porter.

In the East, historical sources indicate a different development of the lower clergy. From the middle of the third century we find there ministers performing similar functions. But they are not reckoned as of the clergy. Subdeacons and lectors are ranked among the clergy later on, when their functions are regulated in a more stable manner. The other minor clergy do not receive a real ordination, but at most are simply blessed by the bishop when the latter chooses them as assistants for the deacons.¹⁴⁰

As to the remuneration of priests, we learn from a passage in one of St. Cyprian's letters that in his time they received a monthly salary (*divisiones mensurinae*) and offerings (*sportulae*).¹⁴¹

The laity is subordinated to the clergy, but not absolutely excluded from the management of the church. In several instances St. Cyprian says that he will not make a decision without first seeking the advice of his clergy and the approval of the *plebs*.¹⁴² As to the people's part in the election of the clergy,

¹³⁵ Tertullian, *De baptismo*, 17; *De praescriptione*, 42.

¹³⁶ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VI, 3.

¹³⁷ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, xliii.

¹³⁸ *Letters*, 29; 34, sect. 4; 45, sect. 4, etc.

¹³⁹ Eusebius, *loc. cit.*

¹⁴⁰ Hergenröther-Kirsch, *Kirchengeschichte*, vol. I, part 4, chap. 8, sect. 1.

¹⁴¹ St. Cyprian, Letter 39, sect. 5; cf. Letter 41, sect. 2; Eusebius, V, xxviii, 10.

¹⁴² Letter 14, sect. 1; cf. Letter 34, sect. 4. He asks the clergy for their *consilium*, and the people for their *consensus*.

it became more and more a negative one and before long was reduced to the right to indicate cases of unworthiness among the candidates.

The bishop, according to the extent of his resources, takes account, if not of the strict right, at least of a sort of claim which every Christian has of being assisted by his Church in case of need; for the Church is a brotherhood, a mutual aid society, in which it is the duty of the rich to come to the relief of their destitute brethren.¹⁴³

This brotherhood continues even after death. The bodies of Christians are laid to rest in common cemeteries. The best known of these cemeteries at Rome are the catacombs of Callistus, Lucina, and Praetextatus. The body of the deceased brother, with or without a sarcophagus, is placed in a niche, which is then closed by a stone slab, or sometimes simply with bricks, along the sides of the underground passages. On these tombs, besides the name and age of the departed brother, are engraved inscriptions such as the following: "*In pace, Vivas in Christo, Vivas in gloria, Pete pro nobis.*" These inscriptions betoken, not only a tender kindness of brotherhood, but also a confident and tranquil hope. The people often came to these venerable spots for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice on the tomb of the martyrs, not only during the times of persecution, but likewise in times of peace, thus showing the union ever existing between the Church on earth and the Church in Heaven. This pious custom is evidenced by the altars, episcopal seats, the whole arrangement of the catacombs with their *atria*, *apses*, and *chapels*.¹⁴⁴

This brotherhood and mutual relief was a bond between different churches. The tradition of the Apostles gathering

¹⁴³ St. Cyprian, *Letters*, II, 2; VII, 4; XLII, 4.

¹⁴⁴ De Rossi, *Roma sotterranea*, *passim*; Marucchi, *Eléments d'archéol. chrét.*, vol. II; De l'Épinois, *Les Catacombes de Rome*, Paris, 1896.

contributions for the poor churches was perpetuated and strengthened. The union of the churches forms more than a simple federation; it constitutes one Church, the Catholic Church. The city official Polemon asks Sabina, a slave: "Since you are a Christian, to what church do you belong?" She answers: "To the Catholic Church." The rhetor Pionus makes the same reply. He is asked: "What is your name?" "Christian," he says. "Belonging to what church?" "Catholic," he replies.¹⁴⁵ No one may rightly say, as did Renan¹⁴⁶ and Harnack,¹⁴⁷ that this Catholicism is nothing more than an "imperialization of Christianity," merely an adaptation to the life of the Roman Empire. "Even as early as the time of the Easter controversy, there are churches beyond the boundaries of the Empire, in the Kingdom of Edessa. . . . And yet what is said of the churches that are in Gaul is said also of the churches that are in Osroene. Though they are Syriac in language, they hold epistolary relations with the Bishop of Rome. . . . The Syriac Catholicism of the Kingdom of Edessa proves that Catholicism is not mere 'Roman-ism' (*romanitas*)."¹⁴⁸

Such is the concept, such the organization of the Church during the latter half of the third century. But along with clearly formed institutions we find others that are as yet only roughly outlined or incomplete. Such are, intermediary between the individual churches and the universal Church, ecclesiastical provinces, patriarchates, and primacies.

In 325 the Council of Nicaea notes the existence of ecclesiastical circumscriptions, called provinces or *eparchies*, embracing several individual churches grouped about one city, which is called the metropolis, the ecclesiastical head of which has a

¹⁴⁵ Leclercq, *Les Martyrs*, II, 76.

¹⁴⁶ *Marc-Aurèle*, p. 69.

¹⁴⁷ *History of Dogma*, II, 149 f.; *Constitution and Law of the Church*, chap. 5.

¹⁴⁸ Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, p. 229.

higher rank than the other bishops.¹⁴⁹ These provinces and metropolises are mentioned by fourth-century writers, who do not intimate that they are something new or recent. Hence we are led to suppose their gradual and progressive formation at the time we are now considering.

The preponderant standing of certain churches, regarded as mother churches, goes back to the beginning. At the outset, Jerusalem was considered the mother church of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee.¹⁵⁰ At an early date Antioch had under its dependence all the churches of Syria, and Alexandria all the churches of Egypt. In the third century, Bishop Serapion of Antioch writes to the Christians of Rhossus in Cilicia, warning them against the apocryphal Gospel of Peter; Bishop Heraclas of Alexandria deposes Bishop Ammonius of Thmuis.¹⁵¹ Whence came these primacies? From the fact that certain churches, having been founded by the Apostles, or by their disciples and, therefore, as it were under their eyes, were regarded as particular centers of orthodox faith. When Tertullian reproaches the heretics with not having the approval of any church founded by the Apostles or "in any way Apostolic,"¹⁵² he is referring to this special authority of certain churches. Of course, many of these metropolitan cities are likewise metropolises in the governmental organization of the Roman Empire. But it would not be right to hold that the Church modeled its organization upon that of the Empire. "Nowhere, before Diocletian, certainly not in the West, is there in the grouping of churches the least indication of a desire to reproduce the lines of the imperial province. . . . Italy depends entirely on the See of Rome; the See of Alex-

¹⁴⁹ Council of Nicaea, canon 4.

¹⁵⁰ Hegesippus, in Eusebius, *H. E.*, III, xxxiii. After the destruction of Jerusalem, Caesarea gradually took its place. By the time of Constantine, Jerusalem again was the metropolis of Palestine.

¹⁵¹ Photius, *Interrogatio* 9.

¹⁵² "*Ab ecclesiis quoquo modo apostolicis.*" (*De praescr.*, chaps. 31 ff.)

andria is the ecclesiastical center for both Egypt and Cyrenaica, although in civil affairs these countries were separately administered."¹⁵³

The following are included in the rights of the metropolitan: to convoke the annual provincial council and preside at it;¹⁵⁴ to preside at the election of the bishops of his province, as also at their consecration;¹⁵⁵ to furnish *litterae communicatoriae* to nominated bishops.¹⁵⁶

Outside the institution of metropolises already developing, we see signs of the formation of patriarchates. The bishop of Alexandria exercised a supremacy over the Thebaid, Pentapolis, and Libya, that is, over several provinces. In the number of bishops dependent, in a sense, upon the bishop of Antioch, some preside over entire provinces. Alexandria and Antioch are soon looked upon as sees of patriarchal authority.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, the bishop of Carthage, exercising a primacy over all Africa, seems to be as it were its primate.

The institution of councils was also developing. Before the time of Constantine, there is no question of an ecumenical or general council.¹⁵⁸ In the second century the Montanist dispute and the Easter question were settled by particular councils. In the third century these become regular and are presided over by the bishop of the principal city. The bishops are amenable to these councils and may even be removed by them, as we have seen in the case of Privatus of Lambaesa.

¹⁵³ Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 383. In the East the boundaries of the ecclesiastical provinces were not made to coincide with those of the imperial provinces until the close of the third century, under Diocletian; in the West, this took place at a later date. (Duchesne, *loc. cit.*)

¹⁵⁴ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VII, xxiv. In Africa the councils were held twice a year: in spring and autumn.

¹⁵⁵ Council of Nicaea, canon 4.

¹⁵⁶ Council of Elvira, canons 25, 28.

¹⁵⁷ See Vaillhé, "*Formation du patriarcat d'Antioche*," in the *Echos d'Orient*, March-April 1912.

¹⁵⁸ The assembly of the Apostles at Jerusalem was, of course, a real council. (See *supra*, p. 76.)

The Ascetic Life

Besides the clerical life and the simple Christian life, we find in the third century the first organization of the ascetic life. It is to be seen among the "consecrated virgins,"¹⁵⁹ the ascetics, and the hermits.

The virgins consecrated to God made a vow of chastity into the hands of their bishops. Some of them lived at home; others, though not forming real convents, formed groups which the bishops sometimes had to rebuke for certain abuses.¹⁶⁰ But everywhere they showed a zeal which makes St. Cyprian call them "the choice flock of faithful souls, leading on earth the life of the angels of heaven."¹⁶¹ It was a general custom for them to wear a veil and long garments made of inexpensive materials.¹⁶²

The ascetics were Christians seeking to realize evangelical perfection. Usually they wear special dress. Origen mentions them after the priests, deacons, and virgins, in a list he gives of the different classes of Christians.¹⁶³ By the austere practice of chastity and poverty they diffused a fragrance of edification among the Christian people. Often the clergy were taken from their number. Bishops and scholars, like Origen, came from their ranks. And sometimes, on the contrary, a bishop, as Narcissus of Jerusalem, resigned his episcopal see and joined in their life of mortification and humility. At the close of the third century, Hieracas, an Alexandrian doctor, or-

¹⁵⁹ Tertullian, *De jejuniis*, 13; St. Cyprian, Letter 75.

¹⁶⁰ *E.g.*, in the case of the *mulieres subintroductae*; Eusebius, *H. E.*, VII, xxx; Council of Elvira, canon 87; Achelis, *Virgines subintroductae*. We should not confuse the *mulieres subintroductae* with the *Agapetae*, about whom St. John Chrysostom wrote a special work.

¹⁶¹ St. Cyprian, *De habitu virginum*.

¹⁶² *Ibidem*.

¹⁶³ *Second Homily on the Book of Numbers*, 10, 19 ff.; *Homily on the Epistle to the Romans*, VI, 15 f.

ganized a group of ascetics leading the common life. By choice they dwelt outside cities, in quiet, solitary places, where they combined the contemplative life with practices of asceticism.

Those who were more strongly attracted to the contemplative life went farther. They entered the deserts of Libya or Egypt and there, remote from men, felt nearer to God. These were the hermits. The Fathers of the eremetical life are St. Paul of Thebes and St. Antony of Heraclea. Paul of Thebes, born of a wealthy family about 228, was a man well educated in profane letters. He advanced through the desert until he came to a cave shaded by a large palm tree, near which flowed a spring of living water. There he spent eighty-six years in meditation and penance and died at the age of one hundred and thirteen years.¹⁶⁴

Antony, who became the principal disciple of Paul of Thebes, was born in 251 at Coma near Heraclea, of a Coptic family. About 270, after his parents' death, he sold his property, placed his sisters in a house for virgins, and lived the life of an ascetic near his village. In 283 he moved into the desert, there to meditate in complete recollection.¹⁶⁵

In Diocletian's reign the number of hermits increased. These solitaries, while apparently withdrawing from mankind to lead an intense interior life in the desert, rendered to their contemporaries and to posterity the most eminent services which men have ever been able to render their fellows. To have a profound knowledge of human nature, its defects, its obstacles, and the manner of overcoming them, to become deeply informed on the mysteries of the contemplation of God and union with Him, the monk Cassian has merely to recall the maxims of the Fathers of the desert.¹⁶⁶ After him, all spiritual

¹⁶⁴ St. Jerome, *Vita sancti Pauli*; cf. *Analecta bollandiana*, II, 561; XI, 292; XX, 121, 127, 211.

¹⁶⁵ St. Athanasius, *Life of St. Antony*, no. 2; cf. *Analecta bollandiana*, II, 341; XVIII, 70; XX, 90.

¹⁶⁶ Cassian, *Collationes*.

writers draw from that incomparable mine. From it comes all our asceticism and all our mysticism.¹⁶⁷

When the connecting bonds of the hierarchy became stronger, a new burst of asceticism and mysticism appeared in the Church. After Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian, after Origen and Cyprian, we have Paul and Antony. How was Renan able to write, and how could a historian of Harnack's worth repeat that, in the history of the Church, the hierarchy stifled enthusiasm and that mediocrity alone created authority? ¹⁶⁸ It is the enthusiasm of Cyprian and Antony, as later of Teresa and Ignatius, that most earnestly demanded the restraint of a rule; and it is the rule which, while disciplining these enthusiasms, made them stronger. The union of a powerful interior life and a firm hierarchy enabled the Church to repel the attacks of heresy, renewed in the person of Paul of Samosata, and the attacks of paganism, renewed and re-kindled under the patronage of Emperor Aurelian.

Paul of Samosata

The Church in the course of the ages has known heresiarchs who were more original thinkers than Paul of Samosata; but she has perhaps never encountered a more elusive and wily character and, at bottom, one that was baser and more shameless. He was born in wretchedness and penury,¹⁶⁹ but through unscrupulous and insinuating ways gradually rose to wealth and honors. Queen Zenobia held him in high esteem. Reaching out for worldly greatness and also for a high position in the Church, he acquired almost at the same time, on the recommendation of high personages whom he flattered, the dignity of bishop of Antioch and the lucrative

¹⁶⁷ Rodriguez, in *The Practice of Christian Perfection*, takes most of his fundamental maxims and examples from the Fathers of the desert.

¹⁶⁸ Quoted by Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, p. 406.

¹⁶⁹ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VII, xxx.

post of receiver of taxes at a salary of 200,000 sesterces. "He wished rather to be called a magistrate than a bishop, strutting through the forum, . . . escorted by multitudes going before and following after him."¹⁷⁰ His life was worldly, his morals were not free from suspicion.¹⁷¹ Since he showed himself easy-going with regard to the weaknesses of his clergy, even while letting it be known that he was cognizant of them, his priests said nothing against him, lest they be disciplined by him. Some, whom he loaded with favors, spread his praise abroad and testified to his virtue.¹⁷²

The great school of sciences at Antioch, which later rivaled that of Alexandria, was not yet founded.¹⁷³ But in the writings of men who, like Theophilus and Serapion, cultivated sacred letters in the metropolis of the East, we note the traits that were to characterize the doctors of that school. In contrast to the lofty and often obscure speculations of the Alexandrian scholars, they set up a commonplace but clearly defined doctrine. They cultivated dialectic more than metaphysics, literal exegesis more than allegorical. The scheming Bishop seized upon this method and soon, in writings of which only fragments remain, published a whole body of doctrine regarding God and Christ.

The Alexandrians became enamored of the theory of the Logos. Paul says that the Logos, or Word, deserves our full homage; but it is a mere attribute of God, without a subsistence of its own, as impersonal as the word spoken by a human mouth.¹⁷⁴ In God there is only one Person, and we must acknowledge only one, unless we wish to destroy the oneness of the Divine Essence and give the lie to hundreds of explicit

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 8.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, nos. 12-14.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, no. 12.

¹⁷³ Eusebius (VII, xxix), however, speaks of a "Greek school of sciences at Antioch."

¹⁷⁴ Routh, *Reliquiae sacrae*, III, 300; St. Epiphanius, *Haereses*, XLV, 3.

texts of the Old Testament. But the Thought of God, after being manifested by Moses and the prophets, was communicated in a more perfect manner to Jesus of Nazareth. The theodicy of Paul of Samosata is nothing more than the Modalism of Theodotus and Artemon, rejuvenated by a more positive and dialectical method of exposition. His Christology is also taken from the Adoptianism of these writers; but he claims to justify it by a more scientific exegesis. For him Christ is a being apart; though so penetrated by the Word of God that we do not lie in calling him "the God born of a virgin," or "the God of Nazareth."¹⁷⁵ But, in reality, Christ is a mere man, who Himself declared in clear, express terms: "My Father is the only true God,"¹⁷⁶ and "The Father is greater than I."¹⁷⁷ On the cross He cried out that He was forsaken by His Father.¹⁷⁸ The Gospel of St. Luke says that, in His childhood, He "advanced in . . . grace with God and men."¹⁷⁹

Many followed Paul of Samosata because of his high office, his relations with others still higher, and the resources of his subtle and crafty mind. Cyprian was no more. Firmilian of Caesarea, Dionysius of Alexandria, and Gregory Thaumaturgus rose up in defense of the orthodox teaching. Firmilian twice journeyed to Antioch;¹⁸⁰ Dionysius wrote to the clergy and faithful of that city. The heresiarch protested his orthodoxy, altered his statements, declared that he had no other purpose but to set forth the traditional doctrine in a more methodical and exact manner: to affirm the divinity of the Word without compromising the essential dogma of the oneness of God, and holding the Logos consubstantial (*homoou-*

¹⁷⁵ *Contra Apollinarium*, II, 3.

¹⁷⁶ John 17: 3.

¹⁷⁷ John 14: 28.

¹⁷⁸ Matt. 27: 46.

¹⁷⁹ Luke 2: 52; see Eusebius, *H. E.*, VII, xxvii-xxx.

¹⁸⁰ Eusebius, VII, xxx.

sios) with the Father; to affirm the divinity of Christ; but explain it by Gospel texts. His opponents departed, deceived by his protestations; but soon after, when they learned that the denial of Christ's divinity was spreading more and more among those who heard the Bishop of Antioch, they were angered at his bad faith. Malchion, a priest of Antioch, who was versed in exegesis and Aristotelian logic, offered to debate with his bishop. To prevent evasion, it was decided that the debate should be held in the presence of the bishops of the neighboring region and taken down by stenographers. More than seventy bishops of Asia Minor and Syria came to Antioch for this gathering. When driven to state his ideas precisely, Paul of Samosata set forth a doctrine which the council declared heterodox. The Bishop of Antioch was deposed and the word *homoousios*, under which he hid his denial of the personality, and thereby of the divinity of Christ, was proscribed.¹⁸¹

Judaism

Paul's condemnation affected Judaism, for he relied very much on the Jews.¹⁸² His teaching, exalting Jewish monotheism in its full rigor and reducing the part of Jesus to that of a prophet, was perhaps an undertaking of Judaic restoration inspired by Queen Zenobia, whose friendliness for the Jews and Judaism was well known.¹⁸³ The religion of Israel, deprived of its Temple and therefore of its great religious cere-

¹⁸¹ The Greek word *ousia* at that time was ambiguous, and could equally well mean "person" or "substance." From the explanations given by Paul of Samosata it is evident that he understood *homoousia* (i.e., the possession of the *ousia* in common) in the sense that the Father and the Son were the same person. Later on, when *ousia* came to have the precise meaning of "substance," as opposed to "person" and "*prosopon*," the term "*homoousios*" ("consubstantial") was consecrated by the Church as expressing the orthodox doctrine. (See St. Hilary, *De synodis*, 81 f., and St. Basil, Letter 52.)

¹⁸² Reinach, *Histoire des Israélites*, p. 39.

¹⁸³ See Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 341.

monies, its priests and Levites, disappeared by extinction. After vainly attempting to rise again through the philosophy of Philo, then through Gnosticism, it withdrew into an exclusive worship of the Law. To comment on the Law and to paraphrase its commentaries seemed to be the whole occupation of its scholars. The Mishna and the two Talmuds (of Galilee and of Jerusalem) represent their entire labors from the second to the fourth century. But since the Jews spread everywhere in the Roman world, the Church was at pains to watch over possible contacts between them and the Christians. About the year 300, the Council of Elvira forbade Christians to eat with Jews or to have their crops blessed by them.¹⁸⁴

Paganism

The greatest enemy of Christianity at the close of the third century was still paganism. Euhemerus' criticism had given the death blow to the worship of Jupiter, Saturn, Venus, and the other ancient gods. But the pagan spirit was deep-rooted. They made fun of Olympus and its mythology; but they kept on having gods; and since those gods did not rise above the natural order, and corresponded only to earthly longings, it was still paganism. The Roman statesman was ever ready to immolate anything to the god of the city; the Greek artist considered the beauty of art and nature as the reason for human life; the common people turned to pleasure as to their supreme end and god; for all, learned or ignorant, rich or poor, stones and trees and statues continued to be objects of superstitious worship. Arnobius, a scholar of that period, in the account of his life before his conversion to Christianity, says: "I worshipped images produced from the furnace. . . . Whenever I espied an anointed stone and one bedaubed with olive oil, as if some power resided in it, I worshipped it, I ad-

¹⁸⁴ Council of Elvira, canons 49 f.

dressed myself to it and begged blessings from a senseless stock.”¹⁸⁵ During the third century, the disasters that befell the Empire and the presentiment that its break-up was coming, awakened in men’s souls, along with a deep anxiety, a real need of religious meditation and prayer. In the case of some this feeling was the starting-point of their conversion to Christianity, but unfortunately in the case of many this feeling was perverted and corrupted by paganism and became its ally. It found expression in three different forms: Neoplatonism, Manichaeism, and the worship of Mithra or the Sun.

Neoplatonism was paganism’s attempt at a religious philosophy—as it were its theology. Plotinus drew up a graded list of being: Being *in se*, Intelligence, the World Soul, Souls, Stars, the Forces of nature. He thus provided pagan minds with a sort of new pantheon. By his theory of common virtue, of ascetic observances and ecstasy, he furnished a sort of programme of religious life that is not without a certain grandeur. But his work did not accomplish for paganism what Philo’s did for Judaism. It was a brilliant essay, but failed to draw men’s souls.¹⁸⁶ His more famous disciple, Porphyry, was conspicuous mostly by his destructive and spiteful criticism of Christian dogma.¹⁸⁷

Manichaeism

Manichaeism later on assumed all the appearances of a Christian heresy and attracted numerous followers in the Roman world. But at first, in the spirit of its founder, in its doctrines and in its practices, it was a pagan sect. Its founder, Mani, is supposed to have been born at Mardinu, south of

¹⁸⁵ *Adversus nationes*, bk. 1, chap. 39.

¹⁸⁶ Christianity made use of its good elements, as it had done in the case of Philo’s philosophy.

¹⁸⁷ Methodius of Olympus and Eusebius of Caesarea wrote in refutation of Porphyry. But their works are lost, while of Porphyry’s book we have only a few fragments.

Ctesiphon, between 214 and 218. He was brought up in the sect to which his father belonged. Later he had private revelations and, when twenty-four years old, began to preach his own system in Babylonia, Persia, Turkestan, and even India. A conspiracy of the magicians brought about his death. Bahram I, king of Persia, had him arrested and beheaded about 275. His system is derived from the old naturalist religion of Babylonia and Chaldea, supplemented by elements from Persian sects. "The foundation of the system is dualism. From all eternity, there are two principles, or rather two kingdoms that are opposed: the one, of Light; the other, of Darkness. Light is the good both physical and moral; Darkness, the evil. These kingdoms are forever placed side by side in their lower and upper parts: yet they never blend together."¹⁸⁸ Satan, a being who came forth from Darkness, one day entered the region of Light. God, the King of Light, drove him out with the help of primitive man; but the latter was made prisoner and, in Satan's embrace, the pure elements became mingled with elements of darkness. Since then, man, being drawn in opposite directions by angels and by devils, is the battle-ground and the victim of a tragic struggle.

How can his liberation be effected? By the practice of austere asceticism. He must set three seals: one on the mouth, one on the hand, and one on the heart;¹⁸⁹ in other words, he must abstain from all pleasures of the senses. The perfect man will go even farther: he will have such a profound regard for universal life that he will not pluck a fruit or crush a blade of grass. As a reward, immediately after his death he will enter into the paradise of Light.

The form of worship was simple: it consisted simply of hymns and songs. In the month of March there was a festivity in memory of Mani's death; this feast brought all his fol-

¹⁸⁸ Tixeront, *History of Dogmas*, I, 406.

¹⁸⁹ "*Signaculum oris, manus et sinus.*"

lowers together, and they prostrated themselves before a richly adorned throne.

Such was primitive Manichaeism. In a summary and arbitrary way, but very expressively, it corresponded to the two problems presenting themselves to man's conscience in the gloomy hours of life: the origin of evil and the possibility of freeing oneself therefrom. Manichaeism quickly spread in the East, but did not reach the Roman Empire directly until about 280. The Church does not appear to have attacked it until the beginning of the fourth century.

Mithraism

The cult of Mithra, god of light, seemed a real menace to Christianity in the third century. Long acclimated to Rome,¹⁹⁰ Mithraism in the middle of the third century was the most widespread form of that vague monotheism which, in pagan beliefs, was gradually taking the place of the discredited fables of classical mythology. God of the Sun, god of fire, giver of life, purifier—under such titles Mithra appealed to the naturalism of the primitive cults and also to the growing demands of consciences. For distressed souls, for hearts troubled by remorse, it had the sacrifice of the bull,¹⁹¹ expiating every sin and giving the votaries a rebirth unto a new life. To such as were fond of marvels it offered curious ceremonies, a series of initiations, and the attraction of mysteries. Although ceaselessly speaking of rebirth and expiation, it did not require its members to practice any austerities or self-denial or virtue. The tombs of the priests and other members bear immoral

¹⁹⁰ Under Septimius Severus the worship of the Sun was spread by Julia Domna and her literary circle.

¹⁹¹ In the ceremony of the sacrifice of a bull, the Mithraist, lying in a ditch, was sprinkled with the blood of a bull that was slain above him on a platform, through which the blood dripped down. The Mithraist then came out of the ditch, cleansed of his faults by this blood-sprinkling, which gave him an eternal rebirth (*"in aeternum renatus"*).

paintings and materialist expressions, mingled with figures which might be thought the product of a spiritualist or even Christian brush.

More completely than any other cult, Mithraism summed up the condition of a society divided between pagan corruption and a higher ideal. This exact conformity with the moral condition of the ancient world explains its power over all classes of the Roman population.¹⁹² The religion of Mithra seemed destined to conquer the Mediterranean world, when Aurelian, the son of a priestess of the temple of the Sun at Sirmium, determined to inaugurate the religion of the *Sol Invictus* at Rome. "Worshipped in a splendid temple, by pontiffs equal in rank to those of ancient Rome, having magnificent plays held in his honor every fourth year, *Sol Invictus* was also elevated to the supreme rank in the divine hierarchy and became the special protector of the emperors and the Empire."¹⁹³ "Did the Emperor hope thus to stop the progress of Christianity? Everything points to it."¹⁹⁴ But the outcome disappointed his expectations. The success of Mithraism was more superficial than deep. Its spread was halted wherever it found itself in the presence of a clearly formulated religious doctrine. It was rejected in Greece, Egypt, and Syria, where no doubt it was thought that, "taking one set of gods with another, it was better not to traffic with the strange deities of barbarians and other enemies of the Empire, but to adhere to those of their ancestors."¹⁹⁵ Judaism resisted stubbornly. Only a few Gnostic sects were seduced. Christianity was safeguarded by the solidity of its organization and the soundness of its doctrinal and moral teaching. It was futile for the priests of the new god to tell the Christians: "Mithra is truly Christian."¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² Allard, *Histoire des pers.*, III, 221.

¹⁹³ Cumont, *The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism*, p. 114.

¹⁹⁴ Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 398.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 397.

¹⁹⁶ St. Augustine, *Tractatus V in Joannem*.

Equally profitless was it for a magistrate to urge a martyr, saying: "Do you see the sky? Sacrifice to it."¹⁹⁷ They heeded the voice of their own learned teachers, telling them that God cannot be adored except by the names given Him by Moses, the prophets, and Christ;¹⁹⁸ they got their inspiration from Rome. The religion of Mithra, despite its obliging advances, its official worship, and the pressure of imperial magistrates, robbed the Church only of an insignificant number of her children. It merely created one more obstacle for her. The pagan world, disabused of its old mythology, was seeking to fill a need of adoration and purification. In the new attraction of this cult and in its mysterious ceremonies, it found a factitious satisfaction, which must have arrested many souls on the way to truth.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ The *Acts of St. Pionius*. Leclercq, *Les Martyrs*, II, 85.

¹⁹⁸ Origen, *Exhortatio ad martyrium*, 47.

¹⁹⁹ On Mithraism, see Cumont, *Textes et documents figurés relatifs au culte de Mithra*; A. d'Alès, "Mithraïsme et christianisme," in the *Revue pratique d'apol.*, February 1, 1907; C. C. Martindale, in *Christus*, pp. 383-405; Lagrange, "Les religions orientales et les origines du christianisme," in the *Correspondant*, 1910, pp. 209-241; Valensin, "L'Image du Christ devant le syncrétisme gréco-romain," in the *Etudes*, 1911, pp. 441-480; Pinard, *Infiltrations païennes dans le culte juif et dans le culte chrétien* in *Revue apologetique*, 1909.

CHAPTER VI

From Diocletian to Constantine (284-306)

SOME emperors, hostile to the Christian idea, but fearful of exposing the tranquillity of the State and their own power to the disturbances of a religious persecution, feigned to ignore the Church. At the end of the third century this attitude was no longer possible. Vainly Diocletian tried to adopt it when he came to power in 284. In his case, such a policy seemed dictated by friendliness rather than contempt. Soon, however, being forced to recognize the great social situation of Christianity, he saw that he must choose one of three policies: to absorb the Church in the State, to exterminate it by violence, or to grant it full liberty. The first alternative suited his taste for centralization; he attempted to apply it so long as he was the only one at the head of the Empire. In the time of the tetrarchy, Galerius' fatal influence led Diocletian to violent persecution. After his abdication, this latter policy was continued by Maximinus and Galerius; but Galerius saw it was not effective. When Galerius was dead and it was perceived that all the methods of oppression had exhausted their might against the Church, a new emperor, Constantine, personally convinced of the truth of Christianity, judged that the moment had come to assure it full liberty in the Roman Empire.

Beginning of Diocletian's Reign

Diocletian's court and even his personal character seemed to give assurance of good will toward the Christians. His wife

Prisca and his daughter Valeria, if not Christians, were at least catechumens.¹ Eusebius, who was contemporary, says that Diocletian entertained a "singular good will for the true faith."² "Why," he adds, "should we speak of those in the imperial palaces, and the sovereigns themselves, who granted their domestics the liberty of declaring themselves freely, in word and deed, on religion, and I would say almost the liberty of boasting of their freedom in the practice of the faith? These, indeed, they eminently valued, and considered them as more acceptable than their associates in the imperial service."³ Eusebius also remarks: "The same privileges one could observe conferred on the rulers in every church, who were courted and honored with the greatest subserviency by all the rulers and governors."⁴ In a tone of joy, which he shares with all his brethren, he says: "Who could describe those vast collections of men that flocked to the religion of Christ, and those multitudes crowding in from every city, and the illustrious concourse in the houses of worship? On whose account, not content with the ancient buildings, they erected spacious churches from the foundation in all the cities. These, daily increasing in magnitude and improvement, were not restrained by any odium or hostility. Nor was any malignant demon able to infatuate, nor did human machinations prevent them, as long as the providential hand of God superintended and guarded His people."⁵

Profiting by this security, the Christians carried out extensive works in the catacombs. In the last years of the third century, the interior architecture of the underground cemeteries underwent a transformation. The burial chambers were enlarged, sometimes assuming the aspect of little basilicas.

¹ Lactantius, *Death of the Persecutors*, 15.

² Eusebius, *H. E.*, VIII, i, 2.

³ *Ibid.*, no. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*, nos. 5 f.

The popes, foreseeing another era of persecution, began to excavate additional passages and rooms, which received light and air from above and which intercommunicated in groups of three or four.⁶

The heads of the Church had reason to anticipate evil days, seeing that an exaggerated feeling of security had taken hold of souls. Says Eusebius: "When we sank into negligence and sloth, the divine judgment began to afflict us."⁷ In what did this negligence consist? The Bishop of Caesarea, relating what took place before his own eyes in the East, mentions especially jealousies, useless disputes, scheming ambitions, rivalries, and intrigues. "One envying and reviling another, hypocrisy and dissimulation had arisen to the greatest heights of malignity."⁸

The decadence of Christian life in the West is more precisely indicated by the famous Council of Elvira,⁹ held about the year 300.¹⁰ This Council deserves our attention because it supplies us with valuable documents, because it begins a series of celebrated Spanish councils, and because it is the first council whose Acts have come down to us. "The Council of Elvira is important for the study of Christian society on the eve of the last persecution. From it we can learn the worldly life of the Christians, and the principles that guided the heads of the community. While the Council gives us a complete and precise enumeration of the evils afflicting Christian society at the close of the third century, it also exhibits a sternness of repression well calculated to make us esteem the moral ideal represented by the prelates of that time and gen-

⁶ De Rossi, *Roma sotterranea*, III, 422, 425, 488, and *passim*. Cf. Leclercq, art. "Catacombes," in the *Dict. d'archéol. chrét.*, and Allard, art. "Catacombes," in the *Dict. apol. de la foi cath.*

⁷ *H. E.*, VIII, i, 7.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Illiberris, now Granada, in Spain.

¹⁰ On the date of the Council of Elvira, see Hefele, *Councils*, I, 132.

erally realized in their churches. There would not have been such severity toward sinners had they been very numerous or if they could have relied on the approval of public opinion and common practice.”¹¹

Among the Christians whom the Council severely penalizes are those who accepted the office of *flamen*, i. e., priest of the municipal or provincial cult of Rome and the emperor. The honorary significance of that office was probably more considered than its religious significance, but the duties of the office might lead Christians to take part in idolatrous sacrifices. The Council decides that any positive act of idolatry would be punished by perpetual exclusion from the Christian community;¹² that if the *flamen*, though not taking part in the pagan sacrifices, gave public games at his expense, such as gladiatorial combats or immoral shows, as was the practice, he could, after doing penance, receive communion at the close of his life;¹³ that a *flamen* in this latter category, if he were a catechumen, could not be baptized until after three years' probation.¹⁴ The following canons impose certain spiritual penalties: for a woman who in anger beats her servant excessively,¹⁵ for those who engage in practices of magic or sorcery,¹⁶ for women who leave their husbands, or husbands who desert their wives,¹⁷ for parents who give up their children to prostitution,¹⁸ for consecrated virgins who are unfaithful to their vows.¹⁹ The Council condemns the marriage of Christians with heretics, Jews, or pagans; but disciplinary penalties are imposed only for marriage with heretics and

¹¹ Leclercq, *L'Espagne chrétienne*, I, 60.

¹² Canons 1 and 2, in Hefele, *op. cit.*, I, 138.

¹³ Canon 3.

¹⁴ Canon 4.

¹⁵ Canon 5.

¹⁶ Canon 6.

¹⁷ Canons 7-II.

¹⁸ Canon 12.

¹⁹ Canon 13; cf. canon 14.

Jews, because these are less indifferent than the pagans for the religion of their partner, and less willing to have the children brought up in the practice of the faith.²⁰ In the same spirit the Council announces penalties against Christians who have their crops blessed by Jews or who eat at table with Jews.²¹ Evidently the purpose of all these prescriptions is to eliminate the Jewish or pagan spirit from the Christian communities and to prevent its infiltration.

Several canons show that the clergy itself needed to be protected from such influences. The Fathers of Elvira considered the matter of clerical continence. Canon 27 forbids the clergy keeping in their houses any women except their sisters or daughters.²² The famous canon 33 forbids "all who are employed in the service of the altar," if they were already married when they received Holy Orders, to continue marital relations with their wives, under pain of deposition.²³ Canon 20 forbids the clergy practicing usury, *i. e.*, according to the language of the time, lending money at interest. Canon 48 forbids the baptized throwing money into the shell which has been used at Baptism. Canon 32 recalls the ancient discipline, reserving to the bishop the right to restore a penitent to the communion of the Church; but a spirit of evangelical mercy is at once shown in canon 38, which declares that a layman has the right to administer Baptism in case of necessity, and in canon 39, which permits a pagan in danger of death to be given both Baptism and Confirmation by the bishop, and in article 42, which allows the time of the catechumenate to be shortened for the sick.

²⁰ Canons 15 and 16.

²¹ Canons 49 and 50.

²² The purpose of this canon seems to be the exclusion especially of *agapetae* and *mulieres subintroductae*. (Cf. Hefele, *Histoire des conciles*, French trans., I, 201, note, and 236; Duguët, *Conf. eccles.*, I, 431-443.)

²³ Ecclesiastical celibacy was an evangelical inspiration widely followed by the clergy before it was made a matter of positive legislation. On this subject, see Vacandard, *Etudes de critique et d'histoire religieuse*, pp. 71-120.

Canon 58 gives us information about the organization of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Spain. It appears to be very similar to that which we have noted in Africa in the time of St. Cyprian. Metropolitan rights are not attached to certain cities, but belong to the bishop of the province who has been longest in the episcopacy; his bishopric is called *prima sedes*.²⁴

This general view of the Christian and ecclesiastical life in the East and the West at the end of the third century will enable us better to understand the blow which Diocletian's measures of persecution dealt to the clergy and the people.

Origin of the Persecution

When Eusebius speaks of the negligence of the clergy and laity as being punished by God's judgment, he seems to be referring especially to the decrees of persecution issued by Diocletian beginning in 302. But other trials also afflicted the Church in the last years of the third century. The character of both is explained by the new turn taken by the imperial policy.

For more than eighty years the Roman Empire had been governed by barbarians. Maximinus was a Goth; Philip, an Arabian; Decius, Aurelian, and Probus were Pannonians; Aemilianus, an African. Diocletian was a Dalmatian, and the helpers whom he soon associated with himself came from the banks of the Danube. These emperors had no taste for Rome, its institutions and its memories. They hardly came to the Eternal City once or twice in their life. They had but scant respect for its divinities, and took little account of its Senate. But they regarded the vast Roman Empire as a means of exercising those proud energies which made them masters of the civilized world. Hence arose a new interpretation of patriotism. If by this term we mean the cult of the national tradi-

²⁴ Hefele, *Councils*, I, 162.

tions, they are altogether devoid of any patriotic feeling; but if by patriotism we mean the jealous defense of the frontiers and a passion for national unity, they were patriotic in the highest degree. Diocletian's clear mind and firm purpose made him the most eminent representative of this new policy.

He seems to have come to the throne with a systematic plan of government. Two phrases sum up his programme: administrative centralization, and the defense of imperial unity; one word expresses its spirit: absolutism. Thus he is the real founder of the later Roman Empire. The more surely to abolish all local political life and every traditional liberty, he first altered the administrative division of the Empire from top to bottom. The Roman world contained about sixty provinces. He increased the number to ninety-six. He then grouped these provinces in more extensive circumscriptions, called dioceses; each diocese was governed by a vicar, *i. e.*, a representative of the prefect of the imperial praetorium. The Senate was reduced to the function of a municipal council. A sort of State Council, called consistory, and a Council of five ministers under the Emperor's immediate direction, expedited governmental business.

The Church promptly adapted itself to this organization. Perhaps it was hard to do otherwise. The groupings of bishops became organized according to the circumscriptions of the provinces. The bishop of the city where the governor resided was at the head of the bishops of his province. Beyond doubt this system offered practical conveniences, but the ecclesiastical institution lost much of its autonomy thereby. The imperial authority insensibly took the place of the Apostolic. Owing to this political and religious centralization around the civil power, Constantine's successors were able to make their authority weigh heavily on the Church. These were the first effects of Diocletian's centralizing absolutism. From his idea

of the national defense there later followed, though less directly, other consequences harmful for religion.

Diocletian learned from the events that gave rise to the period known as that of the Thirty Tyrants. He considered that a regular hierarchical division of the Empire would be the most effective means of preventing those arbitrary and violent dislocations so constantly threatened by personal ambitions or by the urge of popular instincts. He divided the Empire between two who would share the title of emperor, called Augusti, and two heirs presumptive associated in the government and called Caesars. This form of government has been called tetrarchy. It was definitely established in 292. The government of the West was entrusted to Maximian Hercules, who had under his orders, as Caesar, Constantius Chlorus; Diocletian, as first Augustus, kept the East for himself, and was assisted by the other Caesar, Galerius. Diocletian, himself a barbarian, chose for auxiliaries three soldiers who also were barbarians. Galerius was an able and brave general, but an unscrupulous politician. His choice proved to be particularly unfortunate for the Church. Like many mountaineers of his race, he was brutal and crafty, instinctively knowing how to handle men by a clever combination of deception and terrorism, and by a family tradition inimical to Christianity. He was the evil genius of the new imperial régime. It was in vain that Diocletian arranged the powers of the four sovereigns one subordinate to another. He did not reflect that in combinations of this sort a single element of violence, in hours of disturbance, almost inevitably carries along with it the elements of moderation. This is what happened before long.

The work of national defense undertaken by Diocletian considered not only internal enemies, but also and especially enemies from without. The frontiers were everywhere threatened by new barbarians. There he placed a strong series of

military posts supplied with shock troops (*limitanaei, riparienses*), and behind these a solid force of reserves. The discipline had to be strict as danger was threatening. Perhaps at no point was the thrust of the barbarians stronger than along the frontiers of the Danube provinces, where Galerius was in command. He profited by this circumstance to gratify his hatred of the Christians. The historian Lactantius shows us Galerius' aged mother filling her son with detestation of the followers of Christ; ²⁵ she was a fanatical pagan, who may have been jealous of Prisca and Valeria, the Christian princesses of Diocletian's court.

Galerius' ruse consisted in asking from Diocletian, on the pretext of strengthening military discipline, the reëstablishment of the sacrifices to the national divinities. Having obtained his request, Galerius ordered the Christian officers to sacrifice to the gods of the Empire. Many refused and were degraded. A few whose refusal was more forceful were put to death. Diocletian recoiled before the shedding of blood, and Constantius Chlorus followed his example. But Maximian Hercules exhibited almost as great a severity as Galerius, and even inflicted capital punishment on those who refused to sacrifice. Among the martyrs of this first persecution were SS. Marcellus and Cassian. Their authentic Acts have come down to us.

St. Marcellus

While the anniversary of the birth of Maximian Hercules was being celebrated at Tingis (now Tangier), in 298, a centurion by the name of Marcellus walked up to the military standards that had been assembled to receive incense and adoration. But instead of adoring them, he threw down his military belt and cried out: "I am a soldier of Jesus Christ, the

²⁵ Lactantius, *Death of the persecutors*, II.

eternal King." He also cast off his military cap and threw down his arms, saying: "From this day forth I cease to serve your emperors, for I cannot adore your gods of wood and stone, deaf and dumb idols." At these words, those who were present were at first stricken with amazement, then they brought the centurion before the legionary prefect. On October 30th, Marcellus was tried. The following is the official record of his trial, as set down by the Christians of Tangier:

"Is it true that you spoke the words set down in the report of the prefect?"

"Yes."

"You were serving as a regular centurion?"

"Yes."

"What madness made you renounce the military oath and speak as you did?"

"There is no madness in those who fear God."

"Did you speak all the words as stated in the report?"

"Yes."

"Did you throw down your arms?"

"Yes. It was not fitting for a Christian serving the Lord Christ to serve in military forces of this world."

Then Agricola, a lieutenant of the prefect of the praetorium, said: "The conduct of Marcellus should be punished in accordance with the regulations." He thereupon announced the sentence: "Marcellus, who served as regular centurion, has publicly renounced his oath and has spoken other mad words. I command that his head be struck off."²⁶

Upon hearing this sentence pronounced, Cassian, a clerk of Agricola's court, was filled with indignation. He flung away his stylus and tablets. Agricola leaped from his seat, shaking with anger, and asked the clerk what he meant. Cassian replied: "You have given an unjust sentence." The lieu-

²⁶ Leclercq, *Les Martyrs*, II, 157 f.

tenant had Cassian taken to prison. That same day Marcellus was beheaded. On December 3d, Cassian was tried in the very place where he had formerly been a clerk; since he gave the same sort of answers as Marcellus, he was executed in the same manner.²⁷

It seems, however, that the victims of this persecution were not very numerous.²⁸ But the first step had been taken. Now that the Emperor's will had weakened, Galerius might hope to go farther.

First Edict of Persecution

In 302 Galerius went to Nicomedia, Diocletian's usual residence, and remained there until the early part of 303. Under constant pressure from his mother, he undertook by every means to wring from the Emperor a decree of persecution. Diocletian's good sense resisted. "The old man long opposed the fury of Galerius, and showed how pernicious it would be to raise disturbances throughout the world and to shed so much blood; that the Christians were wont to meet death with eagerness."²⁹ Galerius insisted. At last Diocletian agreed to call a council of friends and government officials. They were divided in opinion, but, as often happens in deliberative assemblies when there is no strong hand directing the discussion, soon those who had been undecided joined the ranks of the violent. The persecution was decided upon. Diocletian merely succeeded in having them agree that no blood should be shed.

A decree was prepared. But Galerius, as though he feared the Emperor or his council might revoke their decision, could not wait for the promulgation of the edict. On the 7th of the kalends of March (February 23, 303), the pagans were about

²⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 159 f.

²⁸ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VIII, iv.

²⁹ Lactantius, *loc. cit.*

to celebrate the feast of the *Terminalia* (*i. e.*, the field boundaries) by sacrifices to Jupiter Terminus. With a mixture of superstition and skepticism which marked that period, the Caesar declared this date was indicated to give Christianity to understand that it had finally reached its end.³⁰ Strange to say, Diocletian, who was of a cold and calculating disposition, showed himself accessible to such a consideration. And he never gave up his superstitious tendencies. At dawn, on February 23d, an armed force entered the great church of Nicomedia, pillaged the furnishings, seized the sacred books and gave them to the flames. Then the Pretorian Guards came in battle array, with axes and other iron instruments and, with the incomparable skill of Roman soldiers in promptly constructing or demolishing buildings, roads, and tunnels in their campaign,³¹ they attacked the walls of the cathedral, which in a few hours was levelled to the ground.

The Emperor could not now retreat. On the following day (February 24th) a decree ordered the destruction of the churches and sacred books, the discontinuance of Christian meetings, and abjuration by all Christians. For those of noble rank the penalty was to be stripped of their dignities; for those of lower rank, to be made slaves; for slaves, to be deprived of the right ever to be freed.³²

Diocletian, as a clever politician, thought that, without shedding of blood, by simple administrative measures or penalties of social degradation, he could abolish Christianity, which he had formerly favored. Galerius, still urged on by his aged mother, pointed out to the Emperor, by daily repetition of calumnies and insinuations, that Christianity was breaking up the discipline of the army, corrupting the magistracy, invading

³⁰ *Ibidem*, 12.

³¹ Roman soldiers were remarkably competent at this sort of work. See Lacour-Gayet, *Antonin le Pieux*, pp. 165-171.

³² Lactantius, *op. cit.*, 10, 11, 12; Eusebius, *H. E.*, VIII, ii; *Life of Constantine*, bk. 2, chaps. 50 and 51.

the imperial palace, everywhere conspiring, and ready to attack even his own sacred person. The imperial colossus gives the impression of a machine that is having more and more difficulty in functioning. Each day the Emperor is saddened more and more. On the other hand, his health begins to show the effects of old age and becomes less robust. If a positive attack upon him should excite his anxiety, it will make him feel that he is in danger from the Christians, and he will yield to Galerius' arguments.

Through the imprudence of a Christian and, soon afterwards, through Galerius' perfidy, several such attempts on the Emperor occurred. In a fit of anger, a Christian tore up a copy of the decree which was posted in the forum. He was immediately put to death at the stake. It was impossible to find any accomplices. But presently a fire broke out in the imperial palace. Might not the Christians be responsible? While a fruitless investigation was being made among them, the fire broke out again. Galerius, feigning panic, while rumor pointed to him as the author or instigator of the disaster, left Nicomedia hurriedly, declaring that there were designs upon his life and that of the Emperor.

This time Diocletian's wrath broke out. Soon Galerius was able to measure the significance of the change that took place in the Emperor's mind. The methodical Diocletian, once he undertakes the extermination of the Christians, pursued his purpose to the very limit, combining against them all the forces of the State, as he did for the centralization of his Empire for the defense of its frontiers.

The first measures of severity were directed against the members of his own family and the servants of his palace. The mother of Caesar Galerius must have rejoiced at seeing her two rivals, Empress Prisca and her daughter Valeria, forced to sacrifice to the gods.³³ By good fortune, their defec-

³³ Lactantius, *op. cit.*, 15.

tion was not contagious. "Eunuchs, once the most powerful, and who had chief authority at court and with the Emperor, were slain"; but they did not apostatize.³⁴ Eusebius describes the torture of a certain Peter, who was chamberlain:

"We shall give an account of the end of one, leaving it for our readers to conjecture what must have been the character of the sufferings inflicted on the others. He was led into the middle of the afore-said city, before the emperors already mentioned. He was then commanded to sacrifice; but as he refused, he was ordered to be stripped and lifted on high, and to be scourged with rods over his whole body. . . . But as he was immovable amid all these sufferings, his bones already appearing bared of the flesh, they mixed vinegar with salt, and poured it upon the mangled parts of the body. But as he bore these tortures, a gridiron and fire was produced, and the remnants of his body, like pieces of meat for roasting and eating, were placed in the fire, not at once, so that he might not expire soon, but by little and little. . . . He, however, persevered in his purpose, and gave up his life victorious in the midst of his tortures. Such was the martyrdom of one of the imperial domestics, worthy in reality of his name, for he was called Peter." ³⁵

Officers, magistrates, Bishop Anthimus of Nicomedia, priests, deacons, laymen, on the unproved suspicion of having had a part in the burning of the imperial palace, were burned or drowned *en masse*. The Christians thought they were living in the time of Nero.

Persecution in the Provinces

From Nicomedia the persecution extended into the provinces. But at first it was not marked by the same ferocity there. In some places its severity was attenuated by the kindness of the magistrates, who were Christians or favorable to

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VIII, vi.

Christianity. Moreover, the terms of the decree were not exceeded—its violation was not a capital offense. Yet a few Christians were put to death for refusing to give up the books or furnishings of the churches. Of this number was St. Felix, bishop of Thibiuca (Tubzag) in proconsular Africa, whose Acts are undeniably genuine. He was convicted of refusing to give up the holy books, and on June 24, 303, was brought before the proconsul Anulinus.

"The proconsul said to him: 'Why do you not give up your vain Scriptures?' Felix answered: 'I have them and I keep them.' Anulinus had him placed in the underground dungeon. Six days later he was brought out, still in chains. It was ten o'clock at night. Anulinus said to him: 'Why do you not give up the Scriptures?' Felix replied: 'I will not give them up.' On July 25th, Anulinus ordered him to be transferred to the court of Maximinus. Meanwhile Felix was brought back to prison and put in irons. Nine days later he left for Venosa in Apulia, at the foot of the Apennines.

"The prefect of the praetorium of Italy ordered the chains removed, and said to Felix: 'Why will you not give up the Scriptures of the Lord? Have you them?' Felix replied: 'I have them, but I am not going to give them up.' The prefect said: 'Let his head be cut off.' Felix exclaimed: 'I thank Thee, O my God, who deignest to deliver me!' He was led to the place of execution. It was the 30th of August. Raising his eyes to Heaven, he said aloud: 'My God, I give Thee thanks. I am fifty-six years old. I have kept my virginity. I have kept Thy Gospels. I have preached the faith and the truth. Before Thee I bow my head, O my God, to be immolated.' " ³⁶

Persecution in Rome

A certain number of Christians, by ruse or by the connivance of the local authorities, surrendered some worthless

³⁶ Leclercq, *Les Martyrs*, II, 195.

papers instead of the sacred books.³⁷ Others submitted to the orders of the decree. These were branded with the name of traitors.

The persecution reached Italy. At Rome the sacred books were seized, the archives scattered, the possessions of the Church confiscated. Unfortunately these facts are known only through allusions in the *Liber Pontificalis*,³⁸ or by untrustworthy remarks of the Donatists. Eusebius, who lived in the East, was not well informed of what was happening at Rome. Pope Eutychian (d. December 7, 283), martyr or confessor, was succeeded by Caius, who seems not to have left Rome during the persecution. Most of the time he probably remained hidden in the catacombs. Tradition credits him with the conversion of many pagans. His tomb, in the cemetery of Callistus, became an object of great veneration.³⁹

As to Pope Marcellinus, who governed the Church after Caius (296-304), we would prefer to know him from some source other than the writings of his foes, the Donatists. In the catacombs of St. Callistus, he saved from profanation the area where the popes of the third century and many martyrs had been buried, filling it with earth.⁴⁰ But he had the grief of seeing the archives of the Holy See almost completely destroyed. The existence of these archives and of the papal library, located in one of the most frequented places of the city, near the theater of Pompey, was known to every one. The city authorities had no need of an informer to get possession of so considerable a collection of records which could not easily be removed.⁴¹ This was an irreparable loss for the

³⁷ St. Augustine, *Contra Cresconium*, III, 30.

³⁸ Duchesne, *Lib. pont.*, I, ci and 182.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, I, xcvi, 161; Jaffé, *Regesta pontificum romanorum*, p. 11; De Rossi, *Roma sotterranea*, III, 114.

⁴⁰ De Rossi, *op. cit.*, I, 2 f.; II, 106, 251, 270, and part 2, pp. 52-58.

⁴¹ Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, III, 185; De Rossi, *De origine et historia scrinii et bibl. Sedis apostolice*, p. xxxvii; "Biblioteca della Sede apostolica," in *Studi e documenti di Storia et Diritto*, 1884, p. 334.

history of the papacy and explains our lack of documents. The Donatists blamed Pope Marcellinus for this disaster. They called him "traitor," but brought forward no evidence in support of the charge. St. Augustine notes this fact.⁴² Probably Marcellinus died at the hands of the executioner or in prison. This seems to be indicated by the veneration of his tomb in the catacomb of St. Priscilla, a private burying-place, where he carried out extensive works to supplement the common cemeteries which the edict suppressed.

Later Edicts of Persecution

Those who induced Diocletian to launch the persecution, made use of every pretext to have him increase the penalties. Attempted revolts in Syria and Armenia gave them a chance to persuade him that the Christian conspiracy was winning the provinces. Two new edicts were issued that same year (303). The first of these directed the imprisonment of all the clergy: bishops, priests, deacons, lectors, exorcists; the second ordered that they be punished with death if they refused to sacrifice to the gods. In some provinces these edicts were not rigorously applied, but in certain others they were exceeded. There are genuine Acts showing us Christian laymen being put to death for going to Mass on Sunday.

⁴² St. Augustine, *Contra litteras Petiliani*, II, 202; *De unico baptismo*, 7. A legend inserted in the *Liber pontificalis* (I, 162) says that Marcellinus offered incense to the gods. The *Liber pontificalis* adds that he repented and died a martyr (pp. lxxiv, xcix). "The legend which accuses St. Marcellinus of sacrificing to idols is taken from an apocryphal *Passio*. The account in this *Passio* is certainly false: it speaks of a council of bishops held at Sinuessa; but such an assembly was impossible in a time of persecution. Yet it appears that Marcellinus, if not guilty of apostasy, was responsible to some extent in the matter of giving up the sacred books. St. Augustine does not specify him by name and offers but a weak defense of him against the attacks of Petilian: "*Episcopus nominas, quos de traditione codicum soletis arguere. De quibus et nos solemus respondere: Aut non probatis, et ad neminem pertinet; aut probatis, et ad nos non pertinet.*" (H. Marucchi, *Éléments d'archéol. chrét.*, I, 63 f.)

Such was the case of Felix, Dativus, Ampellius, and their companions, among them eighteen women, who were put to death at Carthage, February 11, 304, together with the priest Saturninus. They were placed on wooden horses and underwent the torture of having their sides torn with iron nails, which ripped pieces of flesh from their bodies. None of them weakened. For the last, the persecutors reserved a little boy, Hilarion, who had been seized during Mass along with his father and brothers. "The judge said to him: 'Did you follow your father and your brothers?' Hilarion, raising his voice, said: 'I am a Christian; I went to the meeting of my own accord.' The proconsul tried to intimidate the child, saying: 'I will have your hair pulled out, your nose and ears torn off.' 'Do as you please,' replied Hilarion: 'I am a Christian.' 'Let him be cast into prison,' ordered the judge. The boy replied: 'Deo gratias!' " ⁴³ The accused Christians, after being tortured, were returned to prison, where the proconsul forgot them. They died of starvation.

Such punishments were as hateful as they were illegal. The edicts of 303, like the edict of Valerian, were aimed only at the clergy. But a fourth decree (304) affected the laity. Its tenor was almost the same as that of Decius' decree. Every Christian, of whatsoever country, was obliged to offer public sacrifice to the gods of the Empire.⁴⁴ This was a formal command to every Christian to apostatize. The persecution was not only universal, but likewise ruthless and brutal.

Eusebius writes:

"We ourselves have observed, when on the spot, many crowded together in one day, some suffering decapitation, some the torments of flames.⁴⁵ . . . As every one had the liberty to abuse them, some beat them with clubs, some with rods, some with scourges, others

⁴³ Leclercq, *op. cit.*, II, 218.

⁴⁴ Eusebius, *De martyribus Palaestinae*, 3.

⁴⁵ *H. E.*, VIII, ix, 4.

again with thongs, others with ropes. Some had their hands tied behind them, and were suspended on the rack, and every limb was stretched with machines. Then the torturers applied the pincers to the whole body. Some indeed were suspended on high by one hand from the portico, whose sufferings by reason of the distention of their joints and limbs, were more dreadful than any. . . . There were some also, after the tortures, placed in the stocks, stretched by both feet to the fourth hole. Others again, being cast on the ground, lay prostrated by the accumulated tortures which they had endured.⁴⁶ . . . Others, at Pontus, endured torments that are too horrible to relate. Some had their fingers pierced with sharp reeds thrust under their nails. Others, having masses of melted lead, bubbling and boiling with heat, poured down their backs, and roasted, especially in the most sensitive parts of the body.⁴⁷ . . . We are already acquainted with those of them that shone conspicuous in Palestine. . . . Who can behold, without amazement, all this: their conflicts after scourging, with bloody beasts of prey, when they were cast as food to leopards and bears, wild boars and bulls, goaded with fire, and branded with glowing iron against them? At these scenes we have been present ourselves.”⁴⁸

There were veritable massacres. The inhabitants of a certain small city in Phrygia had all embraced Christianity. The church was set on fire when the whole population was gathered together in it. They all perished, along with their curator, duumvirs, and other magistrates.⁴⁹ The prescriptions of legal procedure were violated with impunity. A Christian no longer had any rights. If he brought a civil suit against a pagan, the latter had only to establish his opponent's religion in order to nullify the suit. If he dared murmur, he was declared incapable of instituting civil proceedings, and his case was referred to a criminal tribunal that he might be punished for

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, VIII, x.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, VIII, xii.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, VIII, vi.

⁴⁹ Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones*, v, 11; Eusebius, *H. E.*, VIII, xi.

being a Christian. It was unrestrained terrorism; it was the bloody legislation of Nero, Valerian, and Decius, left to the arbitrary administration of the magistracy, of the police, and of the populace.

Abdication of Diocletian

In 305 an important political event led to a change in the situation. Diocletian's health was declining. On March 1, 305, when the Emperor appeared in public after a severe illness, he was hardly recognized. His mind was enfeebled as well as his body. Galerius then persuaded him that the time had come for him to resign. The ambitious Caesar, by the threat of a civil war, had already brought Maximian Hercules to the same resolve. This double resignation raised Galerius and Constantius to the dignity of Augusti. They appointed two Caesars: Flavius Severus, a brutal sot, and Galerius' nephew, Maximinus Daia, a dissolute barbarian. The two new Caesars were the creatures of the first Augustus; and it seemed to Galerius that he could easily dominate Constantius, who was a man of peaceful disposition and of weak health. Further, Galerius had taken the precaution of keeping Constantine, the son of Constantius, at Nicomedia as a hostage. But soon afterwards Constantine went to his father in Gaul. Neither father nor son was inclined to follow Galerius' policy of persecution. Gaul and Britain, until then under the jurisdiction of Constantius, enjoyed comparative peace. Spain, added to their domain after the remaking of the tetrarchy, shared in the advantages of this situation. Severus, subordinate to the tolerant Constantius, followed his policy. The Western provinces escaped almost entirely from the persecution,⁵⁰ which, in the East, under the coarse Galerius and the licentious Maximinus, was marked by unlimited brutality and immorality. A large

⁵⁰ Eusebius, *De martyribus Palaestinae*, 13.

number of Christians accepted martyrdom rather than yield to the shameful proposals of their judges; some even killed themselves to escape the ignoble attempts made upon them by their executioners.⁵¹

St. Agnes

The martyrdom of St. Agnes probably belongs to this period. Agnes is one of the most gracious and poetic figures of the Christian martyrology, but one about whom we have very little reliable documentary information. Yet, even if we entirely reject her Acts, which are posterior to the fourth century, we can obtain a fairly clear notion of her history by simply combining the information taken from oral tradition by St. Ambrose, St. Damasus, and Prudentius.

"At the time of her arrest she was very young, scarcely more than a child. She was twelve or thirteen years old, an age which at that time made her marriageable in Rome.⁵² Did the spite of a rejected suitor contribute to her arrest? This may be inferred from St. Ambrose's account: 'If you expect me to consent,' she said, 'that would be an insult to my divine Spouse. May this body perish, which can be loved by carnal eyes without my so wishing!' " Torture was tried. "She stood up, fearless, in her proud courage, and gladly offered her body to cruel torture." A more dreadful suffering was proposed: "I will expose your modesty in a brothel," said the judge. Agnes was not disturbed. She replied: "Christ is not so forgetful of his own as to let our precious purity be lost. You may plunge a wicked blade into my breast, but you will not stain my body by sin." St. Damascus relates that Agnes was brought underneath the arcades of the stadium of Alex-

⁵¹ *Idem*, *H. E.*, VIII, xii. On these virgin martyrs, see St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 51*; St. Augustine, *City of God*, I, 26.

⁵² See Daremberg and Saglio, *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines*, art. "*Matrimonium*."

ander Severus—where her church now stands in the Piazza Navona—but “her long hair draped the virgin’s body like a cloak.” She was sentenced to be beheaded. “She stood up,” says St. Ambrose, “and bent her head in prayer.”⁵³ Prudentius tells us that a single stroke cut off her head, and death came before pain.⁵⁴ “Thus,” concludes Allard, “ended the life of this girl, of whom we know two facts with certainty: that she lived pure and died a martyr.”⁵⁵

But the tetrarchy broke up. Constantius Chlorus died in 306, and the legions acclaimed his son Constantine as his successor. Maximian’s son Maxentius, encouraged by this example, took advantage of Severus’ unpopularity and had himself proclaimed emperor by the people of Rome and the Pretorian Guard. The aged Hercules, who had abdicated reluctantly, in the ensuing anarchy resumed his title of Augustus. The political situation was not improved by the death of Severus in 307, that of Hercules in 310, and the choice of a new Augustus, Licinius. The religious situation remained almost the same, continuing peaceful in the West, disturbed in the East.

Pope St. Marcellus

Diocletian’s abdication in 305 brought about a great diminution of the persecution in the West. Maxentius was proclaimed emperor in 306. From that time there was a reign of peace, in the sense that pursuit of Christians and assaults on

⁵³ *De virginibus*, I, 2.

⁵⁴ *Peristephanon*, XIV, 89 f.

⁵⁵ Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, III, 385–394. See Tillemont, *Mémoires* (ed. 1702), V, 344–723; art. “Agnès,” in the *Dict. d’hist. et de géog. ecclés.*, and in the *Dict. d’archéol. chrét.*; Franchi de’ Cavalieri, *Santa Agnese nella tradizione et nella leggenda*; Jubaru, *Sainte Agnès, vierge et martyre, d’après de nouvelles recherches*; *Revue des quest. hist.*, January, 1908. Jubaru maintains that there were two martyrs called Agnes: one celebrated by St. Damasus and St. Ambrose, and one praised by Prudentius, and that the pseudo-Ambrose confused them.

Church property were discontinued. But at first this peace did not spell security. The new Emperor's situation was not very firm, and his terrible rival Galerius might be expected to try to take his place. Pope Marcellinus died in 304; his successor was not chosen until 308. The new pope was Marcellus, about whom we have scarcely any information except the epitaph by Damasus at the end of the fourth century and a note in the *Liber Pontificalis*, written in the sixth century, which says that "Marcellus organized the twenty-five titles (*tituli*) in the city of Rome into so many parishes (*dioeceses*) for the reception, by baptism and penance, of the multitudes of converts to the faith and for the burial of the martyrs."⁵⁶ These expressions, referring to the ecclesiastical organization which the sixth century editor of the note had before his eyes, should not be taken literally. There were no real parishes at that time: in the fourth century the words *dioecesis* and *paroe-cia* were elastic and meant any portion of territory subject to an administrator.⁵⁷ It is not improbable that Marcellus, whilst awaiting the restitution of the churches, organized worship in the temporary buildings which the Christians were then using for their meetings, and he may have established some connection between the places of worship and the burial places. From Eusebius we know that the church buildings and cemeteries were not returned to the Church until the pontificate of Miltiades, in 311. St. Damasus' inscription tells us that Pope Marcellus was a victim of disturbances in Rome caused by an apostate, who had renounced Christ in a time of peace,⁵⁸ and blamed the Pope for refusing to receive back into the Church those who had denied the faith during the persecution until after they had done penance proportionate to their fault. A

⁵⁶ *Lib. pont.*, I, 164.

⁵⁷ Hefele, *Histoire des conciles* (French trans.), II, 22, note.

⁵⁸ "*Christum qui in pace negavit.*" See Pope Damasus' inscription in Marucchi, *Eléments d'archéol. chrét.*, I, 229, and *Lib. pont.*, I, 166.

group of apostates, demanding unconditional reinstatement, stirred up serious disturbances in the Christian meetings and in the streets. The foes of Marcellus held him responsible for the disorder and denounced him to Maxentius, who banished him. He died in exile and, about the end of 309 or the beginning of 310, was succeeded by Eusebius,⁵⁹ a Greek priest, who occupied the Roman See only four months. St. Damasus' inscription tells us that the troubles stirred up under the pontificate of his predecessor continued and even became worse during his reign. The party of rebellious apostates chose a leader, Heraclius, who set up his spurious authority against that of Eusebius. This time Maxentius exiled both the pope and the antipope. Eusebius was banished to Sicily and died there shortly after.⁶⁰ On July 2, 311, he was replaced by Miltiades, an African priest, who finally obtained from Maxentius the restitution of the confiscated churches and cemeteries. We know of this official restitution from its mention by St. Augustine in his account of the Donatist controversies.⁶¹

In the East the persecution continued to rage without interruption. The historian Eusebius mentions the following among its chief victims: the learned Pamphilius, founder of the Christian library of Caesarea and compiler of critical editions of the Bible; Bishop Phileas of Thmuis in Egypt, a former magistrate, related to the leading families of the province; and Philoromus, one of the highest imperial officials of Alexandria.⁶² Young men and young women were mercilessly tortured; executions grew in number. At Caesarea the outskirts of the city became a charnel house where birds of prey gath-

⁵⁹ *Lib. pont.*, I, 167.

⁶⁰ See the inscription in the *Liber pontificalis*, I, 167, and Marucchi, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

⁶¹ St. Augustine, *Breviculus collationis cum Donatistis*, III, 34-36.

⁶² See the Acts of Phileas and of Philoromus in Leclercq, *Les Martyrs*, II, 291-296. The authenticity of these Acts has been denied. Tillemont (*Mémoires*, ed. 1711, V, 777) says: "I see no ground for doubting that they are quite authentic."

ered.⁶³ But the characteristic feature of this phase of the persecution was the condemnation of Christians to labor in the mines of Cilicia, Palestine, and Cyprus. Eusebius says:

"It was impossible to tell the great and incalculable number of those that had their right eye dug out with the sword first, and after this seared with a red hot iron; those, too, whose left foot was maimed with a searing iron; after these, those who in different provinces were condemned to the copper mines, not so much for the service as for the contumely and misery they should endure."⁶⁴

The Edict of Peace

An unexpected event suddenly put an end to this violence. The cruel Galerius, stricken with a terrible disease, half devoured by worms,⁶⁵ vainly resorted to the knowledge and skill of the best physicians and consulted the most renowned oracles. Finally he turned in desperation to the God of the Christians and drew up "that remarkable edict which begins by insulting the Christians and ends by asking them to implore their Divine Master for him."⁶⁶ He first abuses the followers of Christ for their "ill will, insubordination, madness," and for their atheism. Then, in words that reveal his arrogance, stupidity, and fear, he promises the Christians "his utmost clemency"; he pardons their crimes and permits "that there may be Christians again, and that they may restore their houses in which they were accustomed to assemble, so that nothing be done by them contrary to their profession. They are obligated to implore their God for our safety, as well as that of the State and their own."⁶⁷

The edict was published in the spring of 311 simultaneously

⁶³ Eusebius, *De martyribus Palaestinae*, 9.

⁶⁴ *H. E.*, VIII, xii.

⁶⁵ For the details of this repulsive disease, see Eusebius, *H. E.*, VIII, xvi; Lactantius, *Death of the persecutors*, 33; Zosimus, *Historiae*, II, 11.

⁶⁶ De Broglie, *L'Eglise et l'empire romain au IV^e siècle*, I, 182.

⁶⁷ Eusebius, *H. E.*, VIII, xvii; Lactantius, *op. cit.*, 34.

in the States subject to Galerius, Constantine, and Licinius. Maximinus Daia also agreed to its provisions. Its promulgation would have been useless in the realm of Maxentius, where the Christians were no longer persecuted. Eusebius and Lactantius, who were eyewitnesses, describe the joy of the Christians: prisons were opened, the mines were emptied, the confessors of the faith forgot their wounds and infirmities and quickly returned to their own countries; processions of these mutilated heroes were to be seen along the highways, singing canticles. At sight of them, the weak took courage, those who had had the misfortune of lapsing under torture grasped the hands of their heroic brethren and besought them to obtain God's pardon for them. All eagerly gathered about their churches, which now began to rise from their material and moral ruins, and the pagans, seeing such things happen, cried out: "The God of the Christians is the only great and true God."⁶⁸ Meanwhile Galerius, the one responsible for all the sufferings of the Christians for almost ten years, was breathing his last in atrocious agony.

The death of Galerius led to an important repartitioning of the Empire. The provinces which he governed in the West were the portion of Licinius, but the more important states dependent on him in Asia became the portion of Maximinus, who thus became master of the whole East.

The Persecution under Maximinus

Maximinus was not whole-hearted in accepting Galerius' edict of peace. As open violation of it was not to be considered, he decided to circumvent it, and to recover, one after the other, the various concessions made in favor of the Christians. Although the edict gave them freedom, it allowed the repression of anything done by them "against good order." Maximinus

⁶⁸ Eusebius, *H. E.*, IX, i; Lactantius, *op. cit.*, 35.

purposed finding a means of attacking them as disturbers of the public order. In October, 311, an imperial ordinance forbade meetings by Christians held at sunset or at night by torchlight. The orgies of Maximinus were the scandal of his court; ⁶⁹ but he pretended to regard the meetings of the followers of Christ as occasions of licentiousness. Theotecnus, one of his abject courtiers, curator of the city of Antioch, a violent and crafty man who, according to Eusebius, ⁷⁰ was capable of any crime or offense, supplied Maximinus with the means of generalizing his measures of oppression.

The clever and detestable plan which Theotecnus carried out in agreement with Maximinus was this: somewhat ahead of the latter he would go to all the cities the Emperor intended to visit, suggest to the officials that the best means of courting the sovereign's favor was to make complaint against the Christians, to have petitions prepared for this purpose, to stir up meetings and conferences, if need be, to hire ringleaders, and thus work up public demonstrations against Christianity.⁷¹ Old calumnies against the Christians, which had been long since spread abroad, but were now forgotten, were revamped. The municipal authorities posted bills containing infamous charges, in the form of an official report.⁷² The so-called *Acts of Pilate*, a blasphemous parody of the Gospel, composed a few years before, was profusely distributed. Teachers were obliged to hand copies of it to their pupils, to use it as material for classroom recitations, commentary, written exercises, and oral declamations.⁷³ Later Julian the Apostate imitated these tactics, but neither he nor his officials ever attained to the shamelessness of Theotecnus and Maximinus.

⁶⁹ On the vices of Maximinus Daia, see Tillemont, *Histoire des empereurs*, IV, 25-86.

⁷⁰ Eusebius, *H. E.*, IX, chap. 2.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, chaps. 2, 4, 6, 7, 9.

⁷² *Ibid.*, chap. 5.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, chap. 1. Cf. I, chap. 9.

When the Emperor thought public opinion had been sufficiently prepared, he began a new persecution. Numbers of the common people were arrested *en masse*, sentenced without trial, and mutilated.⁷⁴ To terrify the followers of Christ, their leaders were seized and haled before the Emperor, who forthwith ordered their execution. Thus died Bishop Peter of Alexandria, Bishop Methodius of Olympus, who had refuted Porphyry and written a dialogue in Plato's style in honor of virginity, and one of the most famous members of the school of Antioch, a certain priest by the name of Lucian, who, after sharing the errors of Paul of Samosata, had humbly returned to the Church and devoted his talent to a revision of the Septuagint.⁷⁵ St. Athanasius relates that the hermit Antony, upon learning in his desert retreat that the persecution was beginning again, came from the banks of the Nile to strengthen his brethren in the faith and then, should God permit it, to receive the crown of martyrdom. But Maximinus' police disdained to bother about this beggar dressed in coarse garments. The founder of the cenobitical life was able, after torture, to return to his solitude and there continued his life of penance and contemplation.⁷⁶

Attempts to Revive Paganism

While thus striking the leaders of the Church, Maximinus, the more surely to abolish the religion of Christ, tried to re-

⁷⁴ Lactantius, *op. cit.*, 36.

⁷⁵ The Church venerates Lucian of Antioch as a saint, but the Arians claimed him as their patron. We know very little of his life. Of his writings almost nothing remains. Sozomen (*Ecclesiastical History*, bk. 3, chap. 5) says that the bishops assembled at Antioch on the occasion of the dedication of the Church of Or, in 341, had found a symbol of Lucian, which they adopted as the authentic profession of faith of their council. But Sozomen's statement is not well founded. A mystery hovers over the work of this personage, whom Arianism considered its precursor, and who gave his life in testimony of Catholic truth. (See Bardy, "*Le Symbole de Lucien d'Antioche*," in the *Recherches de science religieuse*, 1912.)

⁷⁶ St. Athanasius, *Life of St. Antony*, 15.

vive the prestige of pagan worship. With great pomp he erected a statue of "Jupiter, the Friend of man" (*Zeus Philios*), instituted ceremonies of initiation and purification taken from the mysteries of the Oriental religions, attempted to organize pagan priests on the model of the Christian priesthood, wanted to make them preachers and missionaries like the Christian priests, even became a preacher himself, and issued a sort of encyclical to all the officials of the Empire.⁷⁷ Although expiring paganism did not revive, yet the attempt stirred the zeal of a few pagan rhetors, moved more by hatred of Christianity than by any love for the national religion.

"While the executioners were doing their worst against the Christians, a certain sophist, whose name Arnobius has not preserved, attacked them in his lectures. An eloquent apostle of theoretical poverty, he could be seen walking about in a short mantle, with his hair in disorder; but it was well known that his possessions were constantly increasing, thanks to the favor of highly placed personages, that at his house a better dinner was served than in the imperial palace, and also that no kind of austerity was practised there. He preached to the public that the duty of philosophers was to correct the errors of men, and to guide them in the right way; he praised the emperors highly for having undertaken the defense of the old religion and violently attacked the new, of which he knew next to nothing, as was easily perceived. The public, moreover, agreed that the time was ill chosen for this kind of rhetorical display, and that it was discreditable to trample in this way on the fallen. The sophist was hissed."⁷⁸

Presently another orator appeared. It was Hierocles, former governor of Phenicia (later governor of Bithynia), a very notable personage, and one of the Emperor's counsellors. He was held to be partly responsible for Diocletian's first persecution. This much is certain, that, as governor, he sentenced

⁷⁷ This curious imperial letter may be found in Eusebius, *H. E.*, IX, vii, 2-15.

⁷⁸ Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, II, 43.

Christian virgins to what for them was worse than death. Eusebius relates that one day a brave Christian by the name of Aedesius, hearing Hierocles deliver a sentence of this sort, leaped toward the tribunal, slapped the judge, knocked him down, and stamped on him.⁷⁹ Hierocles, not satisfied with condemning Christians to torture and death, determined to destroy their beliefs. So exact was his knowledge of Scripture that Lactantius wonders whether he may not have been a Christian in his youth. He published two books entitled *The Discourse of a Lover of Truth against the Christians*. He was a disciple of Celsus and Porphyry, and was intent on showing the so-called contradictions in the Scriptures. He calls the sacred authors and the Apostles ignorant impostors, who exalted their Master's deeds beyond bounds, and goes so far as to declare that Christ was a leader of Palestinian robbers. His supreme insult was his detestable comparison of Jesus with Apollonius of Tyana, of the Christian religion with paganism. Christ's few miracles, reported by unlettered men, could not, he says, bear comparison with the innumerable prodigies which learned philosophers reported of Apollonius. As for Christianity, after meanly caricaturing it and representing it as a disguised atheism, he contrasts it with a purified paganism, which affirms all the beauties of nature and the nobility of man, and subordinates these to a supreme Being infinitely good and great. At this time Porphyry's writings were also circulated.

Christian Apologists

But the Christian religion had its defenders. Methodius of Olympus, the future martyr, and Eusebius of Caesarea, the future annalist of this epoch, had already refuted Porphyry. Their writings were spread, while Eusebius and two

⁷⁹ Eusebius, *De martyribus Palaestinae*, 5.

recent converts from paganism, Arnobius and Lactantius, took up the defense of Christianity against Hierocles.

St. Methodius of Olympus is not mentioned by Eusebius, probably from a prejudice in favor of Origen, whose tendencies were criticized by Methodius. Bardenhewer considers Methodius to be the greatest writer of his time. His writings bear witness to fine talent and classical culture.⁸⁰ St. Jerome says: "In brilliant and scholarly language, Methodius wrote a voluminous work *Against Porphyry*, the *Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, an excellent book *On the Resurrection* against Origen, and many others that are in everybody's hands."⁸¹

Eusebius of Caesarea's important work *Against Porphyry* was in thirty volumes—St. Jerome was acquainted with twenty of them—but has entirely disappeared. In his sharp reply to Hierocles,⁸² after establishing the real character of the sources from which the sophist obtained his information, Eusebius shows that Hierocles' statements rest on a tissue of fables, and that the so-called miracles of Apollonius are pure inventions or diabolical illusions.

Arnobius was a pagan rhetor who was led to the Christian faith by the excesses of the persecutors and the courage of the martyrs. When he saw the officials ordering the destruction of the buildings that had sheltered only gatherings of people for prayer and charity, and consigning to the flames books that contained nothing but the loftiest and purest thoughts, while they allowed the continuance of theaters that were dishonored by obscene plays and did not interfere with the circulation of poems that outraged decency, his noble soul rebelled.⁸³ The sight of the martyrs' fortitude and, as St. Jerome says, a mys-

⁸⁰ Bardenhewer, *Patrology*, pp. 175 ff.

⁸¹ *De viris illustribus*, 83. We have only fragments of the work *Against Porphyry*.

⁸² *Contra Hieroclem*.

⁸³ Arnobius, *Adversus nationes*, IV, 18-36.

terious vision, brought about his conversion.⁸⁴ The Christians, having been aware of his skepticism, at first distrusted the sincerity of his faith; but they were reassured when, in the very midst of persecution, early in the fourth century, he published a courageous work entitled *Adversus Nationes*. The pagans held Christianity to blame for all the calamities of the Empire, because it attacked the old national religion by which all the Roman institutions subsisted. Arnobius refuted this error, unmasking the allegories and myths by which the defenders of paganism strove to veil the indecency of their mythology and to idealize their religion, and setting forth the grandeur and harmony and benefits of the religion of Christ. When he is attacking the pagan religion, his criticism is sound and vigorous; but his apologetics is weak when he seeks to explain Christianity; his exposition abounds in obscurities and errors.

Far greater is the value of the apologetic writings of Lactantius, his disciple, like him converted by the sight of the persecutions. As a consequence of his conversion he resigned from his professorship of rhetoric in Nicomedia and "lived in poverty," says St. Jerome, "sometimes lacking even necessities." His pen he devoted to the defense of Christianity. In 308 he published his chief work, the *Divine Institutions*. It contains two parts: one part, polemical, is very short; the other, dogmatic, sets forth "the substance of the whole system of Christian doctrine."⁸⁵ His theology is more solid and he is much better informed than Arnobius, but at times lacks exactness and depth. "He is more comprehensive and versatile than Arnobius in his literary work, while his style is more chaste, natural, and pleasing than that of any of his contemporaries."⁸⁶ He has been called the Christian Cicero.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ St. Jerome, *op. cit.*, 79.

⁸⁵ *Institutiones*, V, 4.

⁸⁶ Bardenhewer, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

⁸⁷ In 313 Lactantius wrote *De mortibus persecutorum*. There is no longer any doubt that he is the author of this work. Cf. Duchesne, *op. cit.*, II, 44; Michelet

Meletius of Lycopolis

The struggle against paganism was not the only trial the Church had to endure. Bishop Peter of Alexandria published a certain number of canons, marked by mercy and wisdom, to regulate the reinstatement of lapsed Christians in the Church.⁸⁸ In 306, vehement protest was made against these provisions by a bishop of upper Egypt, one Meletius of Lycopolis, who was known to be an uncompromising rigorist. According to him, the decisions of the Bishop of Alexandria were too lenient and also premature, since the question of rehabilitation affected those whose cases could be settled only after the end of the persecution. A little later Bishop Peter, following the example of his illustrious predecessor, St. Dionysius the Great, judged it prudent to withdraw to a place of retreat unknown to the persecutors. Thereupon Meletius boldly thrust himself into the government of the diocese of Alexandria, performed ordinations, and put men of his own choice in the place of pastors who were in hiding or imprisoned. Four bishops—Phileas, Theodorus, Hesychius, and Pachomius—had been imprisoned for the faith. The venturesome Bishop of Lycopolis assumed the right to exercise episcopal powers in their dioceses. At this the imprisoned bishops protested. The Bishop of Alexandria excommunicated the intruder. Peter's imprisonment and martyrdom, and also the martyrdom of the four previously imprisoned bishops, did not put an end to the intrigues of the rebellious Meletius. He was arrested and sent to the mines of Phoenice. But he soon returned, his

(*History of France*, bk. 1, chap. 3) says: "A more terrible picture has never been drawn than that left us by Lactantius, of this murderous strife between the hungry treasury and the worn-out people, who could suffer and die, but not pay." Chateaubriand, in book 18 of *The Martyrs*, does scarcely more than abridge and translate this picture of the cruelties of Galerius.

⁸⁸ See these canons in Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, V, 32, and in Hefele, *Histoire des conciles* (French trans.), I, 498.

heart no less inflamed and his spirit still haughtier. He bestowed the title of martyr upon himself and some of his fellow-prisoners, and even had the audacity to organize, against the churches occupied by the successors of Peter, Phileas, and their martyred colleagues, assemblies which he called "the churches of the martyrs." These small assemblies were intended to be the nucleus of a whole schismatic hierarchy.

The Plague

Decimated by the persecution, calumniated by the rhetoricians and philosophers, and torn by schism, the Catholic Church about the year 312 was overwhelmed with trials. Yet, more than ever, she remained the great moral force of the time. Upright and sincere souls soon perceived this. While Maximinus was boasting of having assured the Empire's safety and prosperity by the extermination of the Christians, famine and pestilence suddenly burst upon the Roman world. Lactantius and Eusebius depict the two frightful afflictions: wheat rose to exorbitant prices; poor people were reduced to the necessity of eating grass; fathers and mothers bartered their children for a little food; then the terrible carbuncle spread its infection from neighbor to neighbor with amazing rapidity; the streets and public squares were heaped with unburied corpses; the dogs became ferocious from eating human flesh.⁸⁹ The Christians took the same revenge as they did during the plague that devastated the Empire after the persecution of Decius.

"They continued the whole day, some in the care and burial of the dead, others collecting the multitude of those wasting by the famine throughout the city, distributed bread among all.⁹⁰ So that the fact

⁸⁹ Lactantius, *op. cit.*, 23, 37; Eusebius, *H. E.*, IX, viii.

⁹⁰ Eusebius, *H. E.*, IX, viii, 13 f.

was cried abroad, and men glorified the God of the Christians, constrained as they were by the facts to acknowledge that these were the only really pious and the only genuine worshippers of God.”⁹¹

In the presence of this living apologetic, more effective than Arnobius’ and Lactantius’ refutations, the empty charges of the pagan rhetoricians vanished, and the persecution against the religion of Christ appeared as a mere political scheme, which would collapse as soon as its instigators were gone. That day was now near at hand. Eusebius tells us that in the same year 312 Maximinus had to go to the mountains of Armenia and there fight a nation formerly allied with the Romans, but which, entirely converted to Christianity, no longer wished any alliance with the persecutor. Soon he returned, humiliated by defeat.⁹² Shortly afterwards, the standard of Christ, openly unfurled, triumphed in the West with Constantine, marking the end of the bloody persecutions and the beginning of a new era in the history of the Church.⁹³

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, no. 14; Allard, *op. cit.*, V, 195 f.

⁹² Eusebius, IX, viii, 2-4. Cf. Vailhé, “*Formation de l’Eglise arménienne*,” in *Echos d’Orient*, March-April 1913.

⁹³ The early writers, who generally speak of ten persecutions, base their calculation less upon exact inquiry than upon an analogy with the ten plagues of Egypt and the ten horns of the beast of the Apocalypse. Lactantius counts only six great persecutions. Allard merely observes that “the Church endured in the first century six years of suffering; in the second, eighty-six; in the third, twenty-four; and thirteen years at the beginning of the fourth. She was thus persecuted in all during one hundred and twenty-nine years, and was allowed one hundred and twenty years of comparative peace. . . . But these years of peace were at best exceedingly precarious.” (Allard, *Ten Lectures on the Martyrs*, p. 81.) As to the total number of the martyrs, evidently this is not to be ascertained simply by adding the names of those who are mentioned in authentic documents. We know there were many mass executions and many victims of popular outbursts. If, as is just, we take account of these and if, to the martyrs sentenced to death, we add those who were condemned to banishment, deportation, or hard labor, we shall, without depending on legendary or doubtful accounts, reach a multitude that might well be called innumerable. (See Allard, *op. cit.*, lecture IV, on the Number of the Martyrs.)

PART III

THE PEACE INAUGURATED BY CONSTANTINE

Introductory Remarks

FORTIFIED with a strong hierarchy which neither persecution nor schism was able to shake, and still, despite all spoliations, disposing of considerable resources created by the charity of the faithful, the Church, after Galerius' edict of peace, thrust herself upon the attention of governments by her power and upon public opinion by her benefactions. All the means employed to lay her low did but make her greater. In her ranks was a large number of choice members, whose courage the persecution had raised to heroism and who were seasoned in intellectual conflict by debates with the rhetoricians. The Catholic Church was ripe to live her own life as a complete, self-sufficient society, and to render the State the indispensable moral service which the old national religion and the new philosophy showed themselves powerless to supply. The Emperor Constantine gave proof of a pliant mind able to grasp the duties laid upon him by such a situation, proof also of a will sufficiently firm to put them into practice as soon as political circumstances permitted.

To proclaim the right of the Church to complete freedom, to sustain her in the struggle against a painful schism, to attempt to reestablish the religious unity of the Empire by favors to Christianity and by the gradual and prudent extinction of paganism: such was the work of Constantine in the first part of his reign. We must now consider the history of the Edict of Milan, of the struggle against Donatism, and of the general policy of the Emperor toward Christianity and paganism.

CHAPTER I

The Edict of Milan (313)

THE edict of peace of the year 311 had the appearance of a forced and precarious concession. The disturbed condition of the Empire did but add to its uncertainty. It satisfied neither the aspirations of the Christians nor the Empire's need of peace; but it was a decisive forward step toward the complete liberty of the Church and the final peace of the State.

When we express in modern terms the claims continually made by Christian apologists from St. Justin to Lactantius, we risk falsifying the sense of history. The liberty they demanded had nothing in common with that so-called right, inherent in each conscience, to make its religious faith for itself, regardless of any social direction or any divine revelation. First, the Christians were indignant that the worship of Christ had not its free place in the sun, when the impure worship of Jupiter, Venus, Serapis, and Mithra was given so large a place. Whenever they thought the emperors and officials were capable of understanding a more complete truth, they showed them what the State would gain by relying on the moral and doctrinal teaching of Christianity rather than on the fables and superstitions of pagan idolatry. Toward the end of the second century, Athenagoras wrote to Marcus Aurelius and to his son Commodus: "The Empire has made the peace of the world. Why exclude from that peace the Christians, who are neither atheists nor rebels? . . . You permit each one to live in accordance with the traditions of his homeland; and your authority excludes us Christians, although we are guilty of no crime and although our dispositions are the most religious and just

toward the Divinity." At the same period, Melito suggested to Marcus Aurelius that he "protect the Christian religion, which in a way is the foster-sister of the Empire and seems destined to share its prosperity with the Empire." In the measure that Christianity gained ground, these demands became more insistent and the reasons for them appeared more evident. In the middle of the third century, Dionysius of Alexandria felicitated Emperor Gallienus on the protection he granted the Christians, saying: "When I consider the days of the imperial years, I see that the illustrious princes, if they were impious, quickly became inglorious, while this one, holy and beloved of God, has already been reigning for seven years." At the beginning of the fourth century, Eusebius, speaking of the first years of Diocletian's reign, says: "As concerns the Roman Empire, so long as the rulers were favorable and peaceable toward us, what an abundance of good things there was, what prosperity!" The emperors, solicitous for the true well-being of the Empire, heeded that voice. The tolerant and protective measures of Alexander Severus, Gordian, Philip the Arabian, Gallienus, and Galerius prepared the way for the Edict of Milan. It is even mooted whether the decree of Galerius was not intended and calculated by its author as a prelude to the great edict of toleration.¹

¹ In 311 Galerius lies dying, amidst frightful suffering. The magicians who are unable to effect his cure, he orders to be executed. As a last resort, by an act of superstition and dread rather than of faith and love, he turns to the God of the Christians—this seems all that is left for him to do. But at his side are his two colleagues, Licinius and Constantine. Both affix their signatures to the decree, along with the signature of Galerius. Why should we not suppose they had a hand in drafting it? Licinius had long been closely associated with the now dying Emperor, and exercised unlimited influence upon him. Constantine was a statesman already initiated into the art of politics; it may be he took advantage of the circumstances to insert into the lines of the decree the foundations of a general peace. The decree, if closely studied, will be seen to be cleverly written. The imperial edict says that, notwithstanding the persecutions, "a great number of the Christians held to their persuasion, and we saw that they neither gave due reverence to our gods nor worshipped their own god." In other words, it is said that the Christians, under the influence of the persecutions, lived in a state of

Whether purposed by Constantine or not, Galerius' edict was the starting-point of his religious policy. Of the sovereigns who shared the government of the Empire, he was the most conspicuous: Maxentius was unpopular; Licinius submitted to his ascendancy. The master of Gaul was scarcely thirty-six years old. He was tall, with fine, noble features, a supple and vigorous body, with something royal and commanding in his attitude. Men spoke of his deeds on the field of battle, the perils he had gone through, the enthusiasm of the Gallic troops who unanimously proclaimed him emperor at the death of his father, Constantius Chlorus, his moderation in the government of the great province beyond the mountains, the popularity he had won by his firm and gentle rule. When it was learned that Maxentius had declared war against him on the pretext of avenging the death of Maximian Hercules, but in reality through jealousy, public opinion was entirely with the son of Constantius.

We have no occasion to recount the early political and military phases of the campaign: the alliance of Licinius assured by his marriage to Constantine's sister; the accomplices cleverly disposed in the city of Rome; the crossing of the Alps just when Maxentius thought his adversary was on the Rhine; an army of one hundred thousand men debouching unexpectedly on the plains of northern Italy; Susa, Turin, Brescia, Verona, one after the other falling into the power of the intrepid general; his victorious march across Etruria along the Via Flaminia; and the encounter with Maxentius' main force on October 28, 312, at the Milvian Bridge, on the banks of the Tiber, two miles from Rome.

Religion had nothing to do with the origin of this war. Both practical atheism. At first glance this seems to be a strange reason for the decree, but one worthy of Constantine's political spirit. The inauguration of a new policy must appear not to break with tradition. But what had been the traditional reason appealed to against the Christians? The defense of religion, the suppression of atheism. The persecutions were to be ended because they favored irreligion.

competitors had been alike favorable toward the Christians. Nothing in Constantine's past could lead one to suppose that he would some day become the champion of Christianity. No doubt, in the dissolute courts and military camps of that period, for a pagan ruler his example must have been very surprising: it was an example of absolute purity of morals.² Like his father, he always showed little liking for polytheism, and his religious soul was inclined to rise toward the sole Divinity whom he had learned from Constantius to call "the Heavenly Father." But this vague expression was one of the names which the pagans sometimes used to designate Jupiter, king of the gods and of the world.³ The young ruler's lofty beliefs and pure life were such as might dispose him to a friendly tolerance toward the Christians. In his youth he had had a chance to inform himself concerning their faith, for, as Eusebius tells us, Constantine frequently consulted the bishops and priests of Gaul. But he set out on the campaign still a pagan, after offering the usual sacrifices to the protecting gods of the Empire.

The Apparition of the "Labarum"

But when the two rival armies came face to face, it was to be seen that Constantine's soldiers bore on their standards and shields the symbol of the name of Jesus Christ, and that the Emperor gave himself out as the defender of the Christian Church.

What had happened? One of the most notable events in the history of the world, since it was to transfer to the side of the Christians the formidable power which until then had perse-

² Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, I, xix; *Paneg. vet.*, 5, 6, 7.

³ Boissier, *La Fin du paganisme*, I, 19. On the use of this and other similar phrases, such as *Deus aeternus*, *Deus magnus*, *summum Numen*, *summus Deus*, see Batiffol, "La Conversion de Constantin et la tendance au monothéisme dans la religion romaine," in the *Bulletin d'ancienne littérature et d'archéologie chrétienne*, April 1913.

cuted them. Eusebius relates the event, declaring that he received the story from the Emperor himself, who swore to its exactness.

At the outset of a campaign that might result in putting the government of the whole Roman world into his hands, the pious son of Constantius was deeply moved, and his religious soul turned to the supreme Master on whom the destinies of all men depend. Eusebius pictures him as disturbed, pensive, reminding himself that all the rulers who persecuted Christianity had died in agony and shame, whereas his father Constantius, kindly disposed toward the religion of Christ, was the only one that died in peace. The recollection of the priests and holy bishops whom he knew in Gaul, their virtues and worthy teachings, came to his mind. While marching toward the Eternal City at the head of his forces, he asked from God some light, a striking sign. Early one afternoon, while humbly avowing his own weakness, he perceived in the sky a burning cross with the words: "By this sign, conquer."⁴ The following night Christ appeared to him in his sleep, showing him the same sign he saw in the sky, and ordering him to place it on his standards.⁵ Constantine's first care was to obey this

⁴ These words are often quoted in Greek, *τοῦτῳ νίκα*, because Eusebius, who wrote in Greek, reports them in that language, but they probably appeared in Latin, as reported by Nicephorus, Philostorgius, and Zonaras because Constantine and his soldiers spoke Latin.

⁵ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, I, xxvii f. There is a slight difference of details in the accounts of Constantine's vision as related by Lactantius (*Death of the Persecutors*, 44) and by later writers, such as St. Gregory Nazianzen, Sozomen, Socrates, Philostorgius, Nicephorus. The most important testimony is evidently that of Eusebius. "As to the visions by day and by night," says Duchesne (*Early History of the Christian Church*, II, 47), "we have no reason to doubt Eusebius when he tells us that they were related to him by Constantine." But the Emperor may have somewhat dramatized the story of the apparition, when he said that the whole army witnessed it. Dutouquet (art. "*Conversion de Constantin*," in the *Dict. apol. de la foi cath.*) says: "We are inclined to think so. The striking event which he relates was of a sort to impress the imagination and would have received conspicuous notice in the contemporary accounts if, as Constantine says, it had been witnessed by the Emperor and the army." But is the silence of contemporary writers so absolute and certain? "It is true that we have no certain

command. At once he had the standard made after the model indicated to him. This is the origin of the famous *Labarum*. It was also marked on the soldiers' shields: later it appeared on the imperial coins.

Constantine's Victory

Eusebius does not tell us just where the apparition took place. Probably it was in Gaul.⁶ When Constantine's army met that of Maxentius, there was no longer any doubt that a battle would take place.

"Never did Providence prepare the setting for a more solemn action. It was beside a little stream, called the Cremera, on the banks of which the three hundred Fabii had perished. From the heights which here look down upon the Via Flaminia, there was a view of the whole plain of Latium, the scene of the

early or contemporary testimony of any soldier who saw the cross in the sky." (De Rossi, quoted by Desroches, *Le Labarum*, p. 511.) But when an ancient panegyric to Constantine tells us that the haruspices murmured against the bad omen (*Paneg. vet.*, 6), may this not be a reference to the heavenly sign? And did not the orator who, a few years after Constantine's death, spoke of a heavenly troop seen by the whole army above the marching legions, voice a popular rumor? (*Paneg. vet.*, 7.) Whatever may be thought of this detail, anyone who does not *a priori* exclude the supernatural from history will regard the apparition of the labarum as proved so far as an historic event of this sort can be proved. And any Christian who realizes the importance of the battle of the Milvian Bridge and of Constantine's conversion, will regard a divine intervention as natural. Rationalist criticism notes a few passages difficult to reconcile in the accounts of Eusebius and Lactantius. But, as De Broglie says, "without this miracle we would have still greater difficulty in explaining the appearance of the famous labarum on most of the imperial coins, inscriptions, and insignia from that period onward." (De Broglie, *Histoire et diplomatie*, p. 217, and *Le Correspondant*, 1888, p. 594.) "Labarum" was the name that the Germans gave the military standard. See "Labarum" in Du Cange. Batiffol, in a communication (May 9, 1913) to the Société des Antiquaires, discusses the form of the monogram of Christ as it appeared on the shields of Constantine's soldiers. It was a Greek letter *chi*, crossed by a vertical line curving at the top to right and left, like a circumflex accent. This gave the emblem the appearance of a cross, and also of an inverted anchor.

⁶ Perhaps in the vicinity of Chalon-sur-Saône. (Desroches, *Le Labarum*, Paris, 1894.)

hard fought battles that laid the foundations of Roman greatness. The outline of the City could be seen, encompassed by an amphitheater of mountains, and casting a reflection of its buildings on the yellow waters of the Tiber. Upon the summits of its seven hills, adorned with temples and palaces and laden with memories of the past, all the gods of the ancient world seemed to rise up and to perceive the standard of the cross in the distance.”⁷

The battle took place on October 28, 312. Lactantius relates that Maxentius had consulted the Sibylline books as to the outcome of the battle. The pontiffs gave him an equivocal answer, as was their custom. They said: “The enemy of the Romans will perish wretchedly.”⁸ Maxentius, encouraged by this prophecy, mounted his horse and crossed the Tiber on a pontoon bridge. Constantine was already charging at the head of his troops. Soon Maxentius’ cavalry gave way. The presence of their leader failed to restore their confidence, which was beginning to desert them. They started to recross the stream; but the retreating men overloaded the bridge and it broke down. Maxentius, armed as he was, fell into the river along with his horse. The rout was complete. The next day Constantine made his triumphal entry into Rome.

The Christians looked upon this victory as an intervention of Providence. Even the pagans were struck by it. On the triumphal arch erected to the Emperor’s honor near the Colosseum, the Senate ordered an inscription saying that Constantine had acted “at the instigation of the Divinity (*instinctu Divinitatis*).” He himself never ceased thanking God for his victory. On the pedestal of his statue, which represents him holding a lance in the form of a cross, he had the following words inscribed:

⁷ De Broglie, *L’Eglise et l’empire romain au IV^e siècle*, I, 228.

⁸ Lactantius, *op. cit.*, 44.

"By virtue of this salutary sign, which is the true symbol of valor, I have preserved and liberated your city from the yoke of tyranny."⁹

At last the time seemed to have come to inaugurate a real and lasting religious peace. The very vagueness of the expressions used by the Senate and by the Emperor in their memorial inscriptions was an indication of this desire for peace. Constantine does not explicitly name Christ, and the Senate refrains from naming Jupiter.

The Edict of Milan

As a matter of law, religious peace already existed. The edict of 311, signed by Galerius, Licinius, and Constantine, had not been repealed or abrogated. But it was not complete, nor had it been put into effect everywhere. In the East the Christians were still afflicted under the despotic yoke of Maximinus; in the West they were not satisfied with a freedom limited by the arbitrary conditions of public order; in both parts of the Empire they had little confidence in a decree that contained harsh words in their regard. Constantine wrote a stern and threatening letter to Maximinus.¹⁰ The latter had to yield, at least outwardly, and so directed his officials not to do violence to the Christians.¹¹ For the time being, Constantine was satisfied with this, but he was preparing a decisive act. He summoned his colleague Licinius to Milan, to confer with him about regulating the new direction of the Empire. And he also summoned the Emperor Diocletian, who was languishing in his retirement. Constantine would gladly have placed the new religious policy under the auspices of the old head of the imperial family.¹² But Diocletian excused himself on account of his ad-

⁹ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, I, xl.

¹⁰ Lactantius, *op. cit.*, 37.

¹¹ Eusebius, *H. E.*, IX, ix, 13.

¹² Aurelius Victor, *Ep.* 39.

vanced age. The two emperors met at the beginning of the year 313,¹³ and the result of their deliberations was a decree in the form of a constitution, sent to the magistrates of the Empire. It is known in history as the Edict of Milan. It begins thus:

“Inasmuch as we, Constantine Augustus and Licinius Augustus, have met at Milan on a joyful occasion, and have discussed all that appertains to the public advantage and safety, we have come to the conclusion that, among the steps likely to profit the majority of mankind and demanding immediate attention, nothing is more necessary than to regulate the worship of the Divinity.

“We have decided, therefore, to grant both to the Christians and to all others perfect freedom to practise the religion which each has thought best for himself, that so whatever Divinity resides in heaven may be placated, and rendered propitious to us and to all who have been placed under our authority. Consequently we have thought this to be the policy demanded alike by healthy and sound reason—that no one, on any pretext whatever, should be denied to choose his religion, whether he prefers the Christian religion or any other that seems most suited to him, in order that the Supreme Divinity, whose observance we obey with free minds, may in all things vouchsafe to us its usual favors and benevolences.

“Wherefore, it is expedient for your Excellency to know that we have resolved to abolish every one of the stipulations contained in all previous edicts sent to you with respect to the Christians,¹⁴ on the ground that they now seem to us to be unjust and alien from the spirit of our clemency.

“Henceforth, in perfect and absolute freedom, each and every person who chooses to belong to and practise the Christian religion shall be at liberty to do so without let or hindrance in any shape or form.

“We have thought it best to explain this to your Excellency in the

¹³ It was in January, according to De Broglie and Herzberg; in March, according to Allard; in June, according to Boissier.

¹⁴ This reference is to the decree of 311, signed by Galerius, Licinius, and Constantine, not another decree, as De Broglie (*op. cit.*, I, 240) supposes.

fullest possible manner that you may know that we have accorded to these same Christians a free and absolutely unrestricted right to practise their own religion.

“And inasmuch as you see that we have granted this indulgence to the Christians, your Excellency will understand that a similarly free and unrestricted right, conformable to the peace of our times, is granted to all others equally to practise the religion of their choice. We have resolved upon this course that no one and no religion may seem to be robbed of the honor that is their due.”¹⁵

Constantine's thought, underlying the prolixity and repetitions of the edict, must have been quite clear to his subjects. The expressions he uses to set forth his intent are very apt. It put an end to that confusion of the religious with the political order which was the pretext or cause of all the persecutions. Henceforth the Christian conscience, with complete freedom, could render to Caesar what was Caesar's, and to God what was God's. But the State did not thereby become atheistic. It acknowledged and adored the Providence of the “Divinity,” of the “God who is in Heaven.” The fact that one of the two emperors at the head of the government was a pagan prevented more precise expressions than these. But everything points to the supposition that the Divinity to be adored was the God of the Christians. They alone are mentioned by name in the edict: the freedom granted to other religions appears as a consequence of the liberty which is due the Christians. Not a word is said about the old official cult. It is not abolished; by force of circumstances, its personnel and ceremonies for a long time remained more or less connected with the acts of civil and political life. The prudent statesman who drew up the edict had no idea of so upsetting the accustomed order that all progress would be impossible. But his silence regarding it shows

¹⁵ It is certain that Licinius took no significant part in conceiving or drafting the decree. (We quote the text from John B. Firth, *Constantine the Great*, p. 107 f.—Tr.)

that he considered it a dying institution. Upon carefully reading the edict we note that it is well calculated to reassure the pagans and yet to prepare the way for the coming of a Christian policy. To look upon the Edict of Milan as a remote prelude to the Declaration of the Rights of Man is an anachronism which becomes evident even from a superficial examination of the document.¹⁶

The character of the edict stands out even more clearly in the second part. "The enacting clause forms a veritable act of reparation to the Christians. The meeting-places that had been confiscated, even if they were alienated, must be returned to them. Likewise all other property must be restored, whether it belonged to Christians privately or to the body of the faithful, *i. e.*, to the constituted churches. These last are, therefore, recognized as juridical persons competent to possess property. In short, the edict establishes two things: liberty of conscience, a liberty theretofore altogether unknown; and an official recognition of the Church, which it distinguishes from the Empire. This is an event of the first importance."¹⁷

¹⁶ "It has been said that the Edict of Milan was written 'at the dictation of the bishops,' and in this connection we are reminded that the Christian apologists, demanding freedom for Christianity, did so in the name of the principle of tolerance, which they were the first to define and invoke as a principle of natural right. In the eyes of moderns, tolerance is the right of individualism to extend itself to the realm of religion. . . . The Edict of Milan does not presuppose this individualistic notion." (Batiffol, "*L'Edit de Milan*," in the *Correspondant*, March 1913.) The words "*Ne cuiquam religioni auferri aliquid a nobis videatur*," appealed to in behalf of the individualist thesis, seems to us merely to express the desire to respect religious consciences not yet sufficiently enlightened. "One must be blind not to see that the Edict of Milan, as a whole, is written by a Christian and in the interest of Christians. . . . In fact, it has only Christians in mind; they are the only ones explicitly named; and the decree says that the tolerance obtained by the other religions is only a consequence of that which is to be granted to Christianity." (Boissier, "*L'Edit de Milan*," in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, August 1887.)

¹⁷ Chénon, *Les Rapports de l'Eglise et de l'Etat*, chap. 1, sec. 1. On one point the Edict of Milan goes farther than the Concordat (1801) between the Holy See and France. It dispossesses those who have acquired Church property even from the State treasury, whereas the First Consul required that the Holy See should not disturb those who had acquired Church property.

The pagans received the Edict of Milan without murmur. "Yet we may reasonably suppose it was not in good faith they accepted the pact which Constantine offered to all the religions of the Empire; that paganism hoped to recover the supremacy thus taken from it, that it did but await a favorable opportunity to impose that supremacy upon the other religions, and that, consequently, so long as paganism existed, Christianity would not be tranquil. . . . Symmachus, in his discourse on the altar of Victory, demands for his gods not tolerance, but a privileged status. He does not grant that any other religion should be placed on a level with his."¹⁸

The Christians were persuaded that Constantine was more than a liberator, that he was a friendly protector. Though he did not at once abandon all the pagan ceremonies to which an emperor was almost forced to submit, they considered that he was acting by necessity of his official position, but that such necessity would disappear in time.

Personally Constantine was a Christian.¹⁹ But a Christian policy, *i. e.*, a policy based exclusively on Christian doctrine, could not be applied except with infinite precaution. Tertullian, who knew all the departments of the Roman administration, said: "It is impossible for anyone to be both Caesar and a Christian."²⁰ He was referring to those constituted bodies that surrounded the throne, that whole machinery of formalities and procedure intimately connected with the national religion, those pagan rites which mingled with most of the administrative acts, that title of Sovereign Pontiff which belonged to the emperor as the first of his constitutional rights and of which he could not rid himself without abdicating his political authority.²¹

¹⁸ Boissier, *La Fin du paganisme*, I, 79.

¹⁹ Constantine was a Christian by conviction, not by Baptism. He was baptized only a short time before his death.

²⁰ *Ad Scapulam*, 4; *Apol.*, 21.

²¹ Furthermore, Licinius, the colleague of Constantine in the government of the

Constantine saw the difficulty of the enterprise; but this did not discourage him. He thought, as no doubt did the priests who assisted him with their advice, that, while not giving up any of his beliefs, he could make these prevail only in the measure that men's minds were prepared to accept them, that the pursuit of unattainable aims would but delay the obtaining of what was within reach, in a word, that politics is the art of approaching immutable principles to the extent that contingent circumstances permit. Along with this policy of prudence, there was probably mingled in his soul some weakness for the religion of his childhood, some ignorance of the demands of his new faith. Constantine continued to keep the title of Sovereign Pontiff and sometimes even exercised the functions of that office; coins bearing his image continued to display the image of the sun and the dedication *Soli invicto*.²²

But the Emperor omitted no opportunity of showing that he esteemed the Christian religion as the only true religion. In 313 Pope Miltiades held a council in the Lateran palace, which was imperial property. At this period Bishop Hosius of Cordova was attached to the Emperor's person as his counselor and performed the duties of an imperial almoner and even,

Empire, was still a pagan; and the East and West were one in the matter of legislation. (Cf. Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church*, II, 49.)

²² The fact that six of Constantine's successors, who were Christians openly, retained the pontifical title, leads us to suppose that it did not necessarily imply an abjuration of the Christian faith. De Broglie (art. "*Deux portraits de Constantin*," in the *Correspondant*, 1888, pp. 589 ff.) shows how periods of transition are full of such queer compromises. (Cf. Dutouquet, art. "*Conversion de Constantin*," in the *Dict. apol. de la foi cath.*) As regards the coins, Maurice, an acknowledged expert in these matters, says that the treasury officials enjoyed a considerable freedom and considered themselves authorized not to place Christian signs on the coins until they judged that such was, to some extent, the wish of the population. The mints of Tarragona made coins bearing Christian emblems as early as 314; those of the East did not do so until after the death of Licinius in 324. The mint at Arles did not place a Christian symbol on its coins until 335. Cf. Maurice, *Numismatique constantinienne*, and *Bulletin de la Société des antiquaires de France*, 1890, p. 382; 1901, p. 197 ff.

in a way, of minister of worship. Between 320 and 324 there appeared a series of enactments giving the Church civil personality. The Emperor's desire to further the spread of the religion of Christ was evidenced in many ways: the Christians were given the right to leave bequests to churches;²³ it was permitted to free slaves in church;²⁴ the Sunday rest was made obligatory upon courts and offices of the imperial government;²⁵ the Jews were forbidden, under penalty of death at the stake, to stone fellow-Jews who became converted to Christianity;²⁶ the clergy were exempted from taxes and from statute labor.²⁷ The abolition of Augustus' laws against celibacy,²⁸ the abolition of execution by crucifixion and of the breaking of the legs of criminals,²⁹ were a still more delicate evidence of Christian influence.³⁰ At length, in his edict to the Orientals, Constantine clearly called himself a Christian. He expressly informed his subjects that the freedom he so broadly granted to the pagan religion did not come from his indifference to all religions, but from a regard for consciences in which error was deeply rooted. He declared:

"Let every one be free to follow the bias of his own mind. Only let men of sound judgment be assured of this, that those only can live a life of holiness and purity who are called to an acquiescence in the holy laws. With regard to those who will hold themselves aloof from us, let them have, if they please, their temples of lies: we have the glorious edifice of truth. There are some who say that the rites of the heathen temples and the power of darkness have been entirely

²³ *Theodosian Code*, XVI, ii, 4.

²⁴ *Justinian Code*, I, xiii, 1 f.; *Theodosian Code*, IV, vii, 1.

²⁵ *Justinian Code*, III, xii 2.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, XVI, viii, 1.

²⁷ Eusebius, *H. E.*, X, vii.

²⁸ *Theodosian Code*, VIII, xvi, 1.

²⁹ Aurelius Victor, *De Caesaribus*, 41.

³⁰ Cf. Dutouquet, *loc. cit.*

removed. We should indeed have earnestly recommended such removal to all men, were it not that the rebellious spirit of those wicked errors still continues obstinately fixed in the minds of some.”³¹

The great act of Constantine’s religious policy is indeed the Edict of Milan, which proclaims equal freedom for the pagan and the Christian religions. But we must bear in mind these clear words and the whole Constantinian legislation, if we would fully appreciate the character of that important legislative document. Moreover, the Emperor declares his sentiments unmistakably by the manner in which, shortly after his famous edict, he intervened in the Donatist controversy.

³¹ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, II, 56, 60. Two historians, Burckhardt (*Die Zeit Constantins des Grossen*) and Duruy (*History of Rome*, VII, 481), look upon Constantine as an ambitious skeptic, who was prompted in all his acts by selfish calculation. Their view has been attacked by Boissier, *La Fin du paganisme*, I, 32–36; Duchesne, *op. cit.*, II, 48, note, and fully refuted by Grisar (*Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie*, 1882).

CHAPTER II

Donatism

The Beginning of the Schism

THE origin of the Donatist schism goes back to the persecution of Diocletian. Few disputes have been born of a meaner motive: here we do not meet anything like those great doctrinal controversies which stirred the East; yet nothing else has disturbed the Church more deeply, more extensively, and more lastingly. The schism of Donatus is the most striking example of the enlargement which passion can give to futile personal spite. At bottom, the Donatist schism was merely the outburst of a conflict smouldering from the time of Tertullian and breaking forth seventy years after his death, between the spirit of intransigence that held sway in the churches of Africa, and the spirit of wisdom and moderation which the Church of Rome tried to foster everywhere.

“On the soil of Africa, Christianity had always kept a trace of Punic harshness. In this land of sand and fire lived a wealthy people, impetuous, heartily devoted to its convictions and its pleasures. Even the faith there assumed an austere aspect. It was the country of Tertullian. The seeds of his doctrine were ever ready to spring up in that soil. Like Tertullian, the Christians of Africa frequently showed themselves provocative, to the point of recklessness, toward the Roman officials, and merciless toward their faint-hearted brethren whose faith weakened under torture. Their great bishop, St. Cyprian, felt obliged to give them the example of a prudent flight during the persecution, and he subsequently wrote a

whole book, *De lapsis*, to teach them to preserve a middle course between extreme rigor and excessive mercy.”¹ During the persecution of Diocletian a number of Christians presented themselves before the Roman proconsul in a defiant attitude, declaring that they were in possession of the Sacred Scriptures which the imperial edict ordered to be given up, and protesting that they would never surrender them. It was reported that several of them, after this blustering public declaration, did secretly give up the Scriptures, and that this fact explains why they were not imprisoned.² If this was so, their offense was double.

Mensurius, bishop of Carthage, a self-possessed and holy man, protested against this conduct. He said he would refuse the title of martyr to all who, after leading a licentious life, would recklessly face the tortures before amending their morals.³ During the persecution he himself had succeeded in saving both his life and the holy books by a clever ruse. Removing all the religious books from his basilica, he replaced them with heretical works. These the police seized without noticing the difference. Later, some decurions discovered the stratagem and denounced the Bishop to the proconsul; but the latter would not authorize a second search of Mensurius' house. Perhaps he was afraid he might make himself ridiculous by avowing that he had been so cleverly tricked. Thus was saved the library of the Church of Carthage. No doubt to this same able maneuver we owe the preservation of so many authentic Acts of the African martyrs.⁴

But the reckless enthusiasts and those “exploiters of martyrdom” who, loaded with crimes and debts, had themselves imprisoned to win the esteem of the unsuspecting Christians, to be maintained by them, and to begin imposing on

¹ De Broglie, *op. cit.*, I, 256.

² St. Optatus, *De schism. donatist.*, I, 14.

³ Hefele, *Councils*, I, 173.

⁴ Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, IV, 208.

others,⁵ did not forgive Mensurius for showing them up. They were the ones who denounced the Bishop to their fellow-Christians, accusing him of weakness and treason. A bishop of Numidia, Donatus of Casae Nigrae, repeated these recriminations. The Bishop of Carthage, he said, had no doubt given up the holy books, since he was not being attacked. Otherwise he had committed a flagrant deception. In any event, he was guilty of a serious offense.

This Donatus, bishop of Casae Nigrae, was the leader of Donatism, before that other Donatus, of Carthage. While appearing to be a friend of good order in the Church, he was a mischievous meddler, implacably severe toward others, and scandalously indulgent toward himself. Contrary to all the regulations, he was convicted of having imposed hands, for penance or for reordination, upon some bishops who had lapsed during the persecution.⁶

Mensurius' death (311) came soon after this campaign, in which all the personal resentments and private ambitions of his adversaries were let loose against him. His death should have marked the end of the quarrel; but in fact it became the starting-point of the schism. Two priests of Carthage, Botrus and Celestius, intrigued for the succession. But their hopes were disappointed. The electors chose the deacon Caecilian, the closest adviser of Mensurius. Bishop Felix of Aptonga and two other bishops from the vicinity of Carthage conferred episcopal ordination upon him.

One of the results of this election was the entrance upon the scene of a certain woman, named Lucilla. She was a Spaniard by birth, very rich, and, it was said, very devout. At least she had a great deal to do with affairs of the Church, and was not free from oddities in her piety. Caecilian, as a deacon, had occasion to make a public remark with regard to a supposed

⁵ St. Augustine, *Brevic. coll. cum donat.*, III, 25.

⁶ Duchesne, *op. cit.*, II, 87.

relic of a martyr,⁷ which she was in the habit of kissing before receiving communion. Lucilla was greatly humiliated and for that reason felt a keen resentment toward Caecilian, which was increased by his election to the episcopal office. She became the soul of the opposition to the new bishop. Her generous gifts won several Numidian bishops to her side. Secundus, the primate of Numidia, let himself be drawn into the party.

Caecilian was charged with having shared in the crimes of Mensurius, with being a "traitor." Furthermore, they said that his ordination was null and void because performed by an unworthy prelate, Felix of Aptonga, likewise a "traitor." The accusation had no canonical basis in law or in fact. There was no ecclesiastical law declaring invalid any Sacraments conferred by a sinner, and there was no proof that Caecilian or Felix had ever surrendered the sacred books to the persecutors. A certain Ingentius introduced a false document to back this charge, but he was forced to confess his crime.⁸ A most interesting circumstance in this affair was the fact that, at the synod of Cirta (305), Secundus and his friends were convicted⁹ of having themselves given up the Sacred Scriptures, and that, in this same synod, despite the protests of the most prominent citizens, they had consecrated as bishop of that city a certain Silvanus, who was likewise proved guilty of giving up the holy books.¹⁰ But they protested all the louder, in the name of courage and loyalty. Sometimes, however, when they reached the end of so-called legal arguments, they fell into using opprobrious words. They assembled at Carthage

⁷ St. Optatus, *op. cit.*, I, xvi. Caecilian, while still a deacon, forbade the veneration of the relics of martyrs who were not recognized by the Church. This information is contained in a text which is the earliest of those on which can be founded the existence of a *vindicatio martyrum*, analogous to our process of canonization.

⁸ Leclercq, *L'Afrique chrétienne*, I, 326; Duchesne, *op. cit.*, II, 92.

⁹ Hefele, *Councils*, I, 128.

¹⁰ St. Optatus, *op. cit.*, I, xiv.

to the number of seventy and summoned Caecilian to appear before them. But the Bishop, rejecting the jurisdiction of this conventicle, replied that if he had been invalidly ordained, they could remedy this defect of form by consecrating him over again. At this, one of them said: "Let him stand forth as if he were to be consecrated bishop, and let his head be well smacked in penance."¹¹

Without any anxiety about the legality of their procedure, the sullen Numidians proclaimed the deposition of Caecilian and in his place chose a lector, named Majorinus, an intimate friend of Lucilla. The latter promised each of the electors a considerable amount of money, which was given them immediately.¹²

All this happened at the close of the year 312.¹³ The schismatic council sent a circular letter to all the churches of Africa, setting forth its own version of the events. Since Carthage was "in a way the patriarchal see of Africa,"¹⁴ all the African provinces were concerned in the dispute. In nearly every city two parties were formed. In many cities there were two bishops, one Caecilianist, the other Majorinian. The dissident party, however, kept the name of Donatists, since Donatus' influence remained greater than that of Majorinus. Outside of Africa, Caecilian was everywhere regarded as the legitimate bishop.¹⁵

After the Edict of Milan Constantine began making some arrangements about the free temporal administration of the Church. One of his first acts was to communicate with

¹¹ *Ibid.*, chap 19. "*Exeat huc, quasi imponatur illi manus in episcopatu, et quassetur illi caput de poenitentia.*"

¹² Four hundred *folles*. The *follis* of Constantine was worth about 13 cents. Duchesne estimates the total amount distributed by Lucilla at about 60,000 francs (\$12,000). Duchesne, *op. cit.*, II, 85, note. Hefele (*Councils*, I, 177) figures a slightly different sum.

¹³ This is the date fixed by Audollent, *Carthage romaine*, p. 512.

¹⁴ Hefele, *op. cit.*, I, 177.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Caecilian, sending him a large amount of money for his priests. The letter contains this passage:

“As I ascertained that some men, who are of no settled mind, wish to divert the people from the most holy Catholic Church, I have given the proconsul Anulinus and Patricius, the vicar-general of the prefects, when present, the following injunctions: that, among all the rest, they should particularly pay the necessary attention to this. . . . If thou seest any of these men persevering in this madness, thou shalt without any hesitation, proceed to the aforesaid judges and report it to them.”¹⁶

In another letter, addressed to Anulinus, proconsul of Africa, Constantine exempts from all taxes the clergy of the Catholic Church of Carthage, “over which Caecilian presides.”¹⁷

Bishop Hosius of Cordova

Was this attitude dictated by the Emperor's good sense, or was it suggested by the prudent bishop who was then his counsellor? All we know is that at that time the great Bishop Hosius of Cordova was at Constantine's court.¹⁸

For more than half a century the lofty personality of Hosius of Cordova represents the Church of Spain and exercises an influence that is often decisive upon Constantine's religious policy. Hosius was born in Spain, probably at Cordova, about 256. In 295 he was elevated to the see of Cordova, which he occupied for sixty years. By his solid faith and pure morals he gained the universal esteem of his compatriots. Sozomen says that he “was honored for his faith, his virtuous

¹⁶ Eusebius, *H. E.*, X, vi.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, vii.

¹⁸ The first letter from Constantine to Caecilian, at the beginning of 313, mentions the name of Hosius. (Nicephorus, *H. E.*, VII, xlii, in Mansi, *Conciliarum amplissima collectio*, II, col. 68.)

life, and his steadfast confession of truth.”¹⁹ The fire of persecution steeled his character. As a victim of the tyranny of Maximian Hercules, he faced torture with unshaken courage and later on was able to show his fellow-bishops assembled at Nicaea the scars of his wounds. Constantine, upon ascending the throne, wished to surround himself with prudent and well-informed men; he invited Hosius to court and testified the greatest esteem for him. We have reason, therefore, to suppose that Hosius had a decisive though discreet part in the Emperor’s policy toward the Donatist sect.

But Caecilian’s enemies were not idle. In April, 313, the proconsul of Africa was accosted on the street by a group of Majorinus’ followers, who were joined by an excited crowd. They placed two letters in the proconsul’s hands. One of them, which St. Augustine has preserved, bore a title sufficiently indicative of its tenor: “A document of the Catholic Church containing charges against Caecilian.”²⁰ The other letter begged the Emperor, in view of the division of the African bishops, to send from Gaul some judges to decide between the Donatists and Caecilian. This letter, handed down to us by St. Optatus of Milevis, was signed by Lucian, Dignus, Nasutius, Capito, Fidentius, “and other bishops who adhere to Majorinus.”²¹

Constantine promptly appointed three bishops of the Gauls to judge the dispute: Maternus, bishop of Cologne, Reticus, bishop of Autun, and Marinus, bishop of Arles. He transmitted to them all the documents sent him by Anulinus, and requested them to come to Rome, whither Caecilian had been

¹⁹ Sozomen, *H. E.*, I, xvi; Theodoret, *History of the Church from A. D. 322 to A. D. 427*, I, vi.

²⁰ “*Libellus Ecclesiae catholicae criminum Caeciliani.*” (St. Augustine, *Ep.* 88.)

²¹ St. Optatus, *op. cit.*, I, xxii. Duchesne’s *Le Dossier du donatisme* (in *Mélanges de l’Ecole de Rome*, 1890, 631 ff.) makes mention of the Acts produced in the inquiries and counter inquiries that began with this letter of the Donatists and that lasted and crossed one another for almost half a century.

summoned, along with ten bishops of his side and ten of the other.

St. Miltiades

At that time the Roman pontiff was Miltiades, or Melchiades, a native of Africa, according to the *Liber Pontificalis*. He had succeeded St. Eusebius in 310. St. Augustine calls him an "excellent" pontiff.²² Thus far he had striven zealously to guard his flock against the influence of paganism and had his eyes open to the dangers menacing the Church from the Donatist sect. Constantine wrote the following letter to him:

"As many communications of this kind have been sent to me from Anulinus, the most illustrious proconsul of Africa, in which it is contained that Caecilianus, the bishop of Carthage, was accused, in many respects, by his colleagues in Africa; and as this appears to be grievous, that in those provinces which Divine Providence has freely entrusted to my fidelity, and in which there is a vast population, the multitude are found inclining to deteriorate, and in a manner divided into two parties, and among others, that the bishops were at variance. . . . Your gravity will read [the documents] and consider in what way the aforesaid cause may be most accurately investigated and justly decided. Since it neither escapes your diligence that I show such regard for the holy Catholic Church that I wish you, upon the whole, to leave no room for schism or division."²³

The Council of Rome (313)

Miltiades invited fifteen Italian bishops to join the three bishops of Gaul. The council opened October 2, 313, in the imperial palace of the Lateran. The Pope presided. It was said

²² St. Augustine, *Ep.* 162.

²³ Eusebius, *H. E.*, X, v. Constantine's letter is addressed, not only to Miltiades, but also to a certain Marcus, an unknown person, who was perhaps a priest holding some important office at Rome under the pope. (De Broglie, *op. cit.*, I, 267, note.)

that Nero had confiscated this superb edifice from the wealthy family of the Laterani in punishment for their having taken part in a conspiracy against his life. The palace was placed at the Pope's disposal by the Empress Fausta, Constantine's wife. From that time until its destruction by fire in 1308, it was used by the popes as their ordinary residence.²⁴ The gathering there assembled in 313 was the first council officially convoked and personally presided over by a pope, at the request of the civil power, to decide questions affecting the universal Church. The Lateran hill, where the council met under the auspices of a Roman emperor, was very close to the Palatine, opposite the Capitoline, and above the forum. Amidst these splendid memories of pagan Rome, Christian Rome was at last allowed to make her solemn voice officially heard.

The conferences lasted three days. They were marked by a calmness and seriousness that were a contrast to the tumultuous scenes which had given rise to them. At the very outset, all the accusers of proven ill-repute were excluded.²⁵ Likewise all testimony was refused which would amount to nothing more than an account of altercations, acts of violence, or popular uprisings. An investigation was begun about the conventicle of Carthage, at which the year before seventy bishops condemned Caecilian; but this was discontinued, as it would lead too far afield. The question of prime importance to be decided was this: Were there serious and juridically proven charges against Bishop Caecilian of Carthage and against the validity of his ordination? The clearness and determination with which the discussion was directed by Miltiades disconcerted Donatus and his followers, who counted on a tumultuous debate rather than on the justness of their cause. When called upon to introduce reliable witnesses or authentic documents against Caecilian, they were unable to present a single one. Further-

²⁴ See Lauer, *Le palais de Latran*.

²⁵ St. Optatus, *op. cit.*

more, it was proved that, while Caecilian was only a deacon, Donatus had sown division in the Church of Carthage, re-baptized persons already baptized, and reordained bishops guilty of "traditio" (giving up copies of the Sacred Scripture to the pagan authorities). On the third day it appeared that the council had heard sufficient evidence. Caecilian was declared innocent, and Donatus was condemned on the basis of his own testimony. With a desire for peace, the council did not pronounce judgment on the other bishops of the Donatist party. On the contrary, it declared that, if they were willing to remain in the unity of the Church, they could retain their sees; that, in all the cities where there were a Caecilianist bishop and a Donatist bishop, the one longer ordained would remain at the head of the Church, while the other would be put at the head of another diocese. The decision was proclaimed by the presiding bishop, Miltiades of Rome, and communicated to the Emperor.²⁶

The Donatists' Appeal to the Emperor

This decision, which tempered justice with so much indulgence, failed to satisfy men who were seeking the triumph, not of right, but of a party. They said that the matter was ill judged. The question at issue was not whether Caecilian was an upright man, but whether his ordination had been conferred by an unworthy bishop—whether Felix of Aptonga was guilty of handing over the holy books to the magistrates. As heretical and schismatic sects did again and again in the history of the Church, these strict observers of ecclesiastical discipline appealed to the civil power from the conciliar decision which they themselves had invoked. Again they turned to Constantine and asked him to settle the question by himself. These complaints disquieted the Emperor. He was even more disturbed by the

²⁶ Hefele, *Councils*, I, 179. Cf. St. Augustine, *Ep.* 43, sec. 16.

reports which his officials sent him about the situation in Africa. There the division was greater than ever. Not a single one of the Donatist bishops or priests was willing to yield to his rival. The people of Majorinus' party, as recently those of Meletius' faction, called their church "the church of the martyrs," in opposition to what they styled "the church of the traitors." Religious rivalry sometimes degenerated into brawls. From the sanctuary the conflict passed to the street. Constantine thought that the interests of public order called for a prompt solution. After all, what question was involved? One of fact, not of doctrine. He considered that it was within the competence of the imperial officers to settle the question. He, therefore, directed the proconsul Aelianus, the successor of Anulinus, to investigate the case of Felix of Aptonga.

"Surely an odd sight and very significant for every one was this investigation of a bishop by a magistrate, in a purely religious matter which the Church alone could evaluate, regarding a deed which but shortly before had been, not merely permitted, but ordered by the civil law. The question was whether, during the persecution, Bishop Felix made the mistake of obeying the imperial edict and yielding to the threats of the magistrates. In the very court where but lately it was demanded by force, this submission was now imputed to him as a crime. Nothing could better attest the complete victory of the Church over the avowed powerlessness of the State. The civil authority did itself undertake to declare that a person did well in holding his own against it, and the fasces arose only to bow before the cross. That nothing might be lacking to this curious and utter contrast, some police officers were summoned and they testified, to Felix' honor, that he had had the courage to resist them. Alpheus, the edile of Aptonga, swore that when, ten years before, he presented himself at the church of the Christians, Felix was absent, and that only some trifling

letters were turned over to him.²⁷ The Donatist Ingentius, who contradicted his evidence, escaped torture only because his office of decurion saved him from infamous punishment.²⁸ Felix, treated as Caecilian had been, was formally acquitted of the crime of having burned the divine books (*instrumenta deifica*). The decision was dated February 15, 314."²⁹

Now that the Donatists were condemned by the two supreme authorities to which they had appealed, it might be thought they would have to submit, or at least that the Emperor would now forcibly carry out the sentence pronounced by his own authorized officers. But he recoiled before an interference of this sort in an essentially religious question. He decided that the controversy should be definitively settled in a great assembly of the Catholic world, and he summoned the bishops of his Empire to meet in the city of Arles on August 1, 314.

The Council of Arles (314)

Arles, an ancient city of Gaul, the commercial rival of Marseilles, which had been embellished by Marius and by Augustus, ravaged by Chrocus in 260, but magnificently restored by Constantine, deserved to be called the Rome of the Gauls. It was on the Via Aureliana, which put it in communication with Milan and Rome, and the Via Domitiana, which led to Spain, and on the Rhone, which brought it the men and products of Germany. Thus, according to the expression of a certain Roman emperor, it was "the city which the Mediterranean and the Rhone seemed to have chosen as the meeting-place of the nations dwelling on their shores."³⁰ Constantine

²⁷ The Acts of the Vindication of Felix (in *The Works of St. Optatus against the Donatists*, Appendix I).

²⁸ St. Augustine, *Ep.* 68, sec. 4.

²⁹ De Broglie, *L'Eglise et l'empire romain au IV^e siècle*, I, 278. Cf. St. Augustine, *Contra Crescentium*, 78; *Contra donatistas post collationem*, 23.

³⁰ These are the words of Emperor Honorius in his decree of May 23, 418, designating Arles as the meeting-place of the seven provinces of Gaul. On Arles

liked it above all other cities. During his stay in Gaul he made Arles his residence.³¹ It was a happy thought on his part to select it for the council of all the bishops of the Roman Empire.

Constantine himself could not come to the council. "When the council met (August, 314),³² he was in Thrace at the head of his army. But he had arranged every detail in advance. Wishing this council to be very well attended, he invited the bishops from all parts of his empire, defraying their entire traveling expenses. This was called "the benefit of the public coaches," which became conspicuous in all the councils of that century and was a powerful and at times dangerous means by which the lay authority influenced the Church. The Emperor regulated the suite of each bishop, which was to consist of two priests and three servants.³³ The schismatic bishops, like the others, shared in this bounty. Owing to these facilities, bishops of the remotest cities, from Lerida and Capua to Treves and Cologne, came to the council.³⁴

of the fourth century, see V éran, art. "*Arles antique*," in the *Congrès archéologique de France*, 1876-77, pp. 267-297. Cf. Leclercq, art. "*Arles*," in the *Dict. d'archéol. chrét.*

³¹ A Provençal tradition has it that the apparition of the labarum to Constantine took place at Arles. Because of this tradition, the city of Arles for a long time had as its coat of arms a labarum with the inscription "*Arelas civitas*." It even struck a coin representing the same event. (Bouche, *Essai sur l'histoire de Provence*, I, 157.) For a criticism of this tradition, see Desroches, *Le Labarum*, p. 313 ff.

³² Duchesne, "*La Date du concile d'Arles*," in *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire*, 1890, 640 ff.; Hefele, *Councils*, I, 182.

³³ Eusebius, *H. E.*, X, v.

³⁴ De Broglie, *op. cit.*, I, 283. According to Duchesne, the following were the churches represented at the Council of Arles, either by their bishops or by other members of the clergy: *Italy*: Rome, Porto, Centumcellae, Ostia, Capua, Arpi, Syracuse, Cagliari, Milan, Aquileia; *Dalmatia*: a bishop whose name has not been preserved; *Gaul*: Arles, Vienne, Marseilles, Vaison, Orange, Apt, Nice, Bordeaux, Gabales, Eauze, Lyons, Autun, Rouen, Rheims, Treves, Cologne; *Britain*: London, York, Lincoln, perhaps a fourth church; *Spain*: Emerita, Tarragona, Sargossa, Basti, Ursona, and another Church of Baetica; *Africa*: Carthage, Caesarea of Mauretania, Utina, Utica, Thuburbo, Beneventum (?), Pocofeltis (?), Legisvolumini (?), Vera (?).

Most of the Western Church was, therefore, represented at Arles. "We may look on the assembly at Arles as a general council of the West (or of the Roman patriarchate). It cannot, however, pass for an ecumenical council, for this reason, that the other patriarchs did not take any part in it, and indeed were not invited to it; and those of the East especially, according to St. Augustine, almost entirely ignored the Donatist controversy."³⁵

We have no documentary record regarding the proceedings of this assembly. Our conjectures have to be based on the twenty-two canons of the council and the synodal letter it addressed to the pope to report the results of its deliberations. Bishop Marinus of Arles seems to have presided; at least his name heads the list in the synodal letter. Apparently the attitude of the Donatist bishops produced a most unpleasant impression on the majority of the bishops. Their bearing and speech were inspired by wild rage.³⁶ They were dismissed or condemned because of their effrontery.³⁷ The question of principle was then regulated by the following decree:

"Whoever shall have given up the Holy Scriptures or the sacred vessels, or betrayed the names of his brethren, ought to be removed from the ranks of the clergy; always provided that the facts against him be confirmed by official documents,³⁸ and not by mere rumors. If any such person has conferred ordination, and there is no cause of complaint against those whom he has ordained, the ordination so conferred cannot prejudice him who has received it. And, as there are some people who against ecclesiastical rule claim the right of being admitted as accusers, while supported by suborned witnesses, such persons must not be admitted, unless, as we said before, they can produce official documents."³⁹

³⁵ St. Augustine, *Contra Cresconium*, IV, xxv; Hefele, *Councils*, I, 182.

³⁶ "*Effrenatae mentis homines pertulimus*," says the synodal letter. (Mansi, *Concil.*, II, col. 469.)

³⁷ "*Aut damnati sunt aut repulsi*." (*Ibid.*)

³⁸ "*Actis publicis*."

³⁹ Council of Arles, canon 13; Hefele, I, 191.

"Nothing could be wiser. It was necessary to put a stop to the accusations by which, almost everywhere, the clergy were threatened by the discontented, to punish those who were really guilty, to secure peace to the innocent, and to pass condemnation in doubtful cases." ⁴⁰

But nothing could overcome the obstinacy of the Donatists. In vain the Pope sent two bishops, Eunomius and Olympius, to Africa to notify all that the party of Caecilian, in whose favor the council had decided, must alone be considered as Catholic. The two bishops agreed with Caecilian's clergy at Carthage, but the Donatists strove in every way to obstruct their mission.

The Emperor, too, intervened. He summoned the leaders of the two parties. Majorinus had just died,⁴¹ and was at once replaced by a priest who bore the same name as the first instigator of the schism, Donatus. This new leader of Donatism is known as Donatus of Carthage, or the Great. "He was a man of real worth, of blameless morals, and of a bearing worthy of a better cause. He had a cultivated mind, was learned and eloquent, and dominated his whole party by his ability, ceaseless activity, and tireless energy. Unfortunately he was infatuated with himself and immeasurably proud." ⁴² He became the real organizer of the schism and launched the Church of Africa, for more than three centuries, upon the path of the worst misfortunes.

The two bishops debated the issue in the presence of the Emperor. Constantine decided in favor of Caecilian and transmitted his decision to Eumelius, the vicar of Africa.

A number of Donatist bishops submitted when this decision was received. But it would seem that they were induced to do so especially by the influence of the two bishops, Eunomius

⁴⁰ Duchesne, *op. cit.*, II, 89.

⁴¹ This took place in 316. Majorinus died about 315.

⁴² Bareille, art. "Donat," in the *Dict. de théol.*; cf. St. Optatus, *De schism. donat.*, III, 3.

and Olympius (sent by the Pope), who, though loaded with insults, continued their mission of peace in Africa. St. Augustine carefully notes the principal argument that led to the conversion of these Donatists, an argument that he himself developed eloquently. The argument was that those only are Catholics who are in accord with the Church throughout the whole world; but this was true only of Caecilian's party.⁴³

But the great majority remained dominated by Donatus. The Emperor issued orders that the churches held by the Donatists be taken from them by force. Blood was shed.⁴⁴ The "Church of the martyrs" clung to this title more and more tenaciously. They succeeded in making the name prevail with the African people, ever ready to become excited. "The schism spread from one end of Roman Africa to the other. . . . In Numidia nearly everybody was Donatist, and the Catholics

⁴³ This argument, which Newman read by chance in a quotation from St. Augustine, fifteen years later led to his conversion from Anglicanism to the Catholic faith. His own comment (*Apologia pro vita sua*, part 5) is as follows: "The *Dublin Review* of that same August was put into my hands by friends who were more favorable to the cause of Rome than I was myself. There was an article in it . . . on the Donatists, with an application to Anglicanism. I read it, and did not see much in it. . . . But my friend, an anxiously religious man, now as then, very dear to me, a Protestant still, pointed out the palmary words of St. Augustine, which were contained in one of the extracts made in the *Review*, and which had escaped my observation. '*Securus judicat orbis terrarum.*' He repeated these words again and again, and, when he was gone, they kept ringing in my ears. '*Securus judicat orbis terrarum*'; they were words which went beyond the occasion of the Donatists. . . . Not that, for the moment, the multitude may not falter in their judgment—not that, in the Arian hurricane, Sees more than can be numbered, did not bend before its fury, . . . but that the deliberate judgment, in which the whole Church at length rests and acquiesces, is an infallible prescription and a final sentence against such portions of it as protest and secede. Who can account for the impressions which are made on him? For a mere sentence, the words of St. Augustine struck me with a power which I never had felt from any words before. To take a familiar instance, they were like the 'Turn again Whittington' of the chime; or to take a more serious one, they were like the '*Tolle, lege—Tolle, lege,*' of the child, which converted St. Augustine himself. '*Securus judicat orbis terrarum!*' By those great words of the ancient Father, the theory of the *Via Media* was absolutely pulverized."

⁴⁴ The imperial soldiers used great violence on this occasion. See Pallu de Lessert, *Fastes des provinces africaines*, II, 174-233; Duchesne, *op. cit.*, II, 93.

led a hard life. They were made to feel the emptiness of the official protection. Very few persons would have any dealings with them, not only in matters religious, but even in affairs of ordinary life. 'What is there in common,' people said, 'between the sons of the martyrs and the followers of the betrayers?' " ⁴⁵ The Emperor then resorted to gentle measures, advised his officials to employ patience, and the bishops to forget the insults. ⁴⁶ But the tolerance shown the Donatists merely led them to clamor the more, to seize the churches of the Catholics, and to terrorize the people. Three centuries were required to extinguish the fire of the African schism. ⁴⁷

Decisions of the Council of Arles

The urgency of the Donatist peril did not divert the Fathers of the Council of Arles from other important questions that were still disturbing Christians and might result in lamentable divisions. They did not wish to end the Council without settling the Easter controversy and the question of the Baptism of heretics, or without passing certain disciplinary regulations.

The Council required Easter to be celebrated at the same time, on the same day, throughout the world. Evidently the Fathers' intent was to have the Roman manner of fixing the date put into effect everywhere. ⁴⁸ Later on the Nicene Council was obliged to issue new prescriptions on this point.

⁴⁵ De Lessert, *loc. cit.*

⁴⁶ Letter of Constantine to the bishops and people of Africa. (In Migne, *P. L.*, VIII, col. 491.)

⁴⁷ A comprehensive history of Donatism will be found in volume IV of Monceaux' *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne*. The dogmatic aspect is sketched briefly, but the social and political points of view are treated at length. Monceaux is of the opinion that Donatism was a cause of weakness and ruin for Africa. It brought disturbance everywhere, provoked religious war, encouraged social strife, and heaped up wretchedness. It divided Christian Africa in two. It lessened the expansive power of African Christianity and the resistant power of Roman civilization in Africa. The feebleness of Roman Africa in the presence of the Vandals, and perhaps of Byzantine Africa in the presence of the Arabs, was owing to Donatism, or, if you prefer, to what was more specifically African in the Christianity of Africa. (Cf. *Bulletin d'ancienne littérature*, 1912, pp. 225 ff.)

⁴⁸ Canon 1.

The Council declared that Baptism administered by heretics must be considered valid, provided it was administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,⁴⁹ since the validity of the Sacraments does not in any way depend upon the degree of faith or virtue of the person conferring them.

The second and twenty-first canons concerned clerics who leave the Church where they were ordained. The inconsistency of many ecclesiastics in this matter had led to some disorder in the Church. This abuse was first occasioned by the persecutions; the honors generally paid to outside ecclesiastics was another occasion, though less legitimate than the first. The Fathers of Arles decided that ecclesiastics who did not stay in their first church would be deprived of an office which they had received for that church only. Against such the penalty is deposition.⁵⁰

Because of variants in the manuscripts, different interpretations have been given to the third canon: "*Qui arma projiciunt in pace [in bello?], placuit abstineri eos a communicatione.*" Is the Council excommunicating "those who use arms in battle," or "those who, in time of peace, employ deadly weapons," for example, in gladiatorial combats? Cellier and Hefele offer another explanation, which follows the grammatical construction less closely, but is more naturally suggested by the political circumstances. They give the following meaning to the canon: Lately, in the times of persecution, there was an excuse for Christians who, through religious scruples, avoided armed service; but now that the Church enjoys peace, to evade military service is an offense deserving of excommunication.

⁴⁹ Canon 8.

⁵⁰ It is questionable whether the canon merely forbade a transfer from one diocese to another, or whether it also prohibited a change of parish. Canon 77 of the Council of Elvira, which shows us an irremovable clergy in each parish, would incline us to the latter interpretation.

Canons four and five excommunicate persons who make a business of entertaining the populace by spectacles.

Canons six and seven recall the prescriptions of the Council of Elvira facilitating the entrance of sick persons into the catechumenate, and stating the conditions under which officials in office could receive the Sacraments. Other canons repeat and supplement decisions of that same council with regard to marriage and usury. The fifteenth canon forbids an incredible abuse by certain deacons who, during the persecutions, arrogated the right to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice where there was no bishop or priest. The last canons treat of various conflicts of jurisdiction that may arise between ecclesiastics.

The Fathers of the Council of Arles used the expression, "*Placuit ergo, praesente Spiritu Sancto et angelis ejus*" ("it has seemed well to us, in the presence of the Holy Ghost and His angels"). They beg the Pope, as having a more extensive authority than theirs, to publish their decrees. Before the close of their sessions, they wrote him the following letter :

"Would, most beloved Brother, that you had deemed it well to be present at this great spectacle. We believe surely that in that case a more severe sentence would have been passed against them ; and our assembly would have exulted with a greater joy, had you passed judgment together with us. But since you were by no means able to leave that region where the Apostles daily sit, and their blood without ceasing bears witness to the glory of God, it did not seem to us that by reason of your absence, most well-beloved Brother, we ought to deal exclusively with those matters on account of which we had been summoned, but we judged that we also should take counsel on our own affairs ; because, as the countries from which we come are different, so events of various kinds will happen which we think that we ought to watch and regulate. Accordingly we thought well in the presence of the Holy Ghost and His angels that from among the various matters which occurred to each of us, we should make some

decrees to provide for the present state of tranquillity. We also agreed to write first to you, who hold the government of the greater dioceses, that by you especially they should be brought to the knowledge of all.”⁵¹

Pope St. Sylvester I

The see of Rome was at that time occupied by Sylvester I. The *Liber Pontificalis* devotes an unusually long notice to this Pope. Abundant documents furnish us details about his private and public life. The mighty events in which he took part, the personal influence he appears to have had with Emperor Constantine, the rapid and brilliant advance which the Church made under his pontificate, have drawn to his person the attention of historians, hagiographers, and apologists. Unfortunately these last have too indiscriminately accepted legendary accounts which today can hardly be distinguished from true history. “Popular imagination invented numerous dealings between the first Christian emperor and the Pope who governed the Church in his time.”⁵² Events that happened later, but at dates that cannot be exactly determined, have been referred to his pontificate; and they have been dramatized and embellished. Such a literature does not develop except about the name of great men; but details of their life are often obscure. We will, therefore, leave to special studies the critical examination of the more or less legendary accounts of the pontificate of Sylvester I,⁵³ and will here simply set down the beginning of the official note written in the sixth century about this Pope: “Sylvester, a Roman by birth, was the son of

⁵¹ Quoted in *The Works of St. Optatus against the Donatists*, p. 390. On the Council of Arles and the exact meaning of its canons, see *Hefele, Councils*, I, 180-199.

⁵² Hergenröther-Kirsch, *Kirchengeschichte*, vol. II, bk. 2, part 1, chap. 7, sec. 1.

⁵³ See especially De Smedt, *Principes de la critique historique*, p. 137; Duchesne, *Lib. pont.*, I, cix-cxx, 170-201.

Rufinus. He occupied the see for twenty-one years, ten months, and twelve days, from the kalends of February of the consulship of Volusianus and Anianus [314], to the kalends of January in the consulate of Constantine and Albinus [335].”⁵⁴

The Council of Ancyra (314)

The Pontiff greatly rejoiced upon receiving the acts of the Council of Arles. The mighty questions that threatened to disturb the peace of the Church in the West were at length clarified and decided.

At almost the same time the Eastern bishops held a council in the city of Ancyra, now Angora. The Orient was spared the Donatist schism; but the question of the lapsed and the question of penance had caused a considerable stir there. And, as in the West, there was need of regulating several doubtful points of discipline.

The Council met in 314⁵⁵ about Pentecost time, in Ancyra, the capital of Galatia. In the lists that we have of the bishops taking part in that assembly, are the names of Vitalis of Antioch, Basil of Amasea, Eustathius of Nicomedia, Leontius of Caesarea in Cappadocia, Marcellus of Ancyra, who later became famous in the Arian dispute. A number of these

⁵⁴ *Lib. pont.*, I, 170. The *Liber pontificalis* says that Sylvester, “during a persecution in the reign of Constantine, was forced to seek asylum on Mount Soracte. Led back to Rome in triumph, he baptized Emperor Constantine, whom God cured of leprosy by the power of the Sacrament of Regeneration.” This last detail is one of those which the Church has officially recognized as unhistorical. Under Pope Leo XIII the legend in the Roman Breviary was corrected on this point. There we read simply that St. Sylvester “*Constantinum a lepra infidelitatis sanavit.*” Many writers, following Papebroch (*Acta sanctorum*, May, vol. V), hold that Constantine was not even baptized by Pope Sylvester. According to their contention, the Emperor was baptized on his death-bed by Eusebius of Nicomedia. This latter opinion is made historically certain by the explicit testimony of St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, Eusebius, and the Council of Rimini. (On this point see a note by Pagi in Baronius, *Annales*, ed. 1734, V, 40 ff.)

⁵⁵ The reasons for adopting this date may be seen in Hefele, *Councils*, I, 199.

bishops, eleven years afterwards, took part in the first ecumenical Council of Nicaea. "They belonged to such different provinces of Asia Minor and Syria, that the Synod of Ancyra may, in the same sense as that of Arles, be considered a *concilium plenarium*, that is, a general council of the churches of Asia Minor and Syria. From the fact that Vitalis of Antioch is mentioned first (*primo loco*) and that Antioch was the most considerable seat of those who were represented at Ancyra, it is generally concluded that Vitalis presided over the Synod." ⁵⁶

Of the twenty-five authentic canons of the Council of Ancyra, nine relate to the lapsed, *i. e.*, the Christians who denied their faith during the persecution; ⁵⁷ ten treat of the penance incurred by certain grave sins; ⁵⁸ six concern various matters of discipline and ecclesiastical jurisdiction. ⁵⁹

The first nine canons are very important for Church history. They supply precise information about the existence and regulation of canonical penance at the period of the persecutions. The various classes of penitents are mentioned: the *keimazomenoi*, who perform their penance outside the precincts of the church, exposed, as their name indicates, to all the inclemencies of the weather; ⁶⁰ the *audientes*, or hearers; the *substrati*, or prostrate; and lastly the *consistentes*, who take part in the common prayer, but not yet in the offering or in the Holy Communion, these last two rites being the term and crown of the canonical penance. The guilty were treated differently according as they belonged to the episcopacy or the lower clergy or the laity. It is to be noted also that the discipline established by the Council was not so strict that it could

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, I, 201.

⁵⁷ Canons 1 to 9.

⁵⁸ Canons 16 to 25.

⁵⁹ Canons 10 to 15.

⁶⁰ They are enumerated in canon 17.

not be mitigated by each bishop, who was the judge of the fervor of the penitents of his church.⁶¹ We should also remark that, by a mitigation of the discipline previously observed by the churches, Holy Communion was thereafter to be accorded to any penitent who was in danger of death.⁶²

The last ten canons concern certain crimes which, when committed by Christians, had at first led the heads of the churches to exclude the guilty ones permanently from the communion of the Church: sins against nature, rape, murder, forcible usurpation of ecclesiastical powers and the practice of magic. The Fathers of Ancyra, in a spirit of distributive justice and evangelical charity, declared all these crimes remissible, but they attached penances proportioned to the offense.

Canons 10 to 15, relative to the internal discipline of the Church, regulate various questions concerning the continence of the clergy,⁶³ the rights acquired by betrothal, the irregularity incurred by the offering of sacrifices to idols, the powers of the *chorepiscopi*,⁶⁴ and practices of false asceticism.

While in the East as well as in the West, the Church, in a spirit of prudent firmness, sought to heal the wounds made by the persecution, the vanquished paganism tried with a final effort to win back its former influence and again shed Christian blood in its desperate convulsions.

⁶¹ Canons 1, 2, 21, 23.

⁶² Canons 6, 22.

⁶³ Canon 10, inserted in the *Corpus juris canonici*, is, along with canon 33 of the Council of Elvira, a valuable landmark for the history of sacerdotal celibacy. There we see that, although in principle the Church still left the clergy the right to the use of a previously contracted marriage, celibacy was favored so far as possible, and most of the married clergy—bishops, priests, and deacons—practiced continence.

⁶⁴ On the delicate problems raised by canon 13 with regard to the powers of the *chorepiscopi* and of priests, see Le Bachelet, art. "*Ancyre (Concile d')*," in the *Dict. de théol.*, I, cols. 1174 ff.

The Martyrdom of St. Salsa

One of the most moving episodes of this crisis was the martyrdom, at Tipasa, of the Christian maiden Salsa. "While the pagan shrines were being closed or were falling into ruins, it happened that the devotion of the followers of idolatry concentrated on some more living religion or some local superstition, where paganism took its last stand. In many cities the cult of Mithra was heir to all the other religions. But in the little Mauritanian town of Tipasa, between Iconium (Alger) and Caesarea (Cherchell), the scene of the events we are about to relate, the only sanctuary that remained standing was the chapel of Python, where the worship of the Serpent was practiced, a worship that was always cherished by the African population. An ancient historian has left a picture of the merry-making occasioned by that worship. He speaks, as one who may have been an eye-witness, of the dilapidated temple walls trimmed with laurel wreaths, the sanctuary of the impure idol adorned with tapestries, the incense-holders smoking on the altars, the choir of singers and dancers, the enthusiasm of the worshippers soon mounting to frenzy. Into the midst of this orgy there was forcibly brought, by her fanatically pagan parents, a pure and graceful fourteen-year-old girl, Salsa, who professed Christianity, which for some time had been flourishing at Tipasa. She was tremblingly forced to be present at the sacrifice and the sacrilegious meal that followed it. But, while those who brought her were taking their repose along with the others, after this meal, Salsa determined to avenge her humiliation and anguish upon the god. Quietly rising, she slipped into the chapel, snatched the gilded head of the Serpent, and threw it into the waves that beat at the foot of the hill. Emboldened by this success, Salsa entered the sanctuary, lifted in her weak arms the body of the dragon, and hurled it from the top of the cliff. But the noise of the

brazen monster rebounding against the rocks made the deed known to the pagans. The crowd gathered together, howling with rage. Some of them, crazed with fury and unaffected by her youth and charm, seized the fearless child and threw her into the sea, where she had intended to drown their god. Three days later, a ship from Provence entering the harbor of Tipasa, picked up the martyr's body. The Christians, with the help of the sailors, buried it on the shore, near the harbor. Soon a spacious basilica rose over her tomb; remains of it have been discovered in our own day."⁶⁵

Events of this sort preceded the crisis of persecution which broke out in the East under Licinius. This colleague of Constantine signed the Edict of Milan only as a matter of policy and impulse. Before long Constantine's growing influence aroused his jealousy. Licinius' sole aim presently seemed to be to destroy the effects of the edict by relying on the pagan party. He began by removing the Christians from his court, then from his army. He reduced the number of Christian assemblies and imposed irksome regulations on them. Eusebius compared this deceitful foe of the Church to a serpent that, not daring a frontal attack, entwines itself about the limbs of its victim so as to envelop it with its coils and gradually crush out life.⁶⁶

The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste

Several Christians, several priests and bishops, guilty of violating these regulations, were ill-treated, banished, massacred. St. Jerome's *Chronicle* mentions, among the martyrs of this persecution, Bishop Basil of Amasea in Pontus, who had been one of the prominent members of the Council of Ancyra. Many soldiers also were martyred. The most illustrious were the forty heroes of Sebaste, whom the Fathers of the Church

⁶⁵ Allard, *Hist. des pers.*, V, 290 ff.

⁶⁶ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, II, i.

vie with each other in praising.⁶⁷ Having refused to take part in an idolatrous sacrifice, they were sentenced to death by the prefect. "The manner of execution was horrible. One winter's night, the martyrs were stripped bare and placed on a frozen pond which was swept by the cold north wind and lighted by the glow from a house close by, where water was warmed for the baths. One of them, vanquished by his suffering, left his companions and dragged himself to the bath; no sooner did his frozen limbs feel the warmth than he died. A few moments more of perseverance would have won him the martyr's palm. Then an incident occurred which is not unique in the history of the persecutions. The apparitor in charge of the warm baths had observed the courage of the other condemned Christians, and had witnessed the defection of the one apostate; he saw in the snow those thirty-nine almost frozen bodies on which eternal rewards were descending, and in the bath that single dishonored corpse. Sudden emulation gripped him. Casting off his garments, he cried out: 'I am a Christian,' and took the place left vacant by the apostate. At daybreak he was found with the martyrs and with them was taken to the stake where their bodies were to be burnt. One of the condemned was overlooked by the lictors, who, seeing him still alive, hoped he would abjure. But his mother, who was present at this scene, took him in her arms and laid him in the cart near his companions: this heroic woman feared he might lose the palm or would have a solitary martyrdom, removed from the heroes whose combat he had shared."⁶⁸

News of events like this brought sorrow to the West. As Eusebius says, "the part of the Empire that was plunged in darkness turned its eyes to that part which enjoyed great

⁶⁷ St. Basil, *Homily 20*; St. Gregory Nazianzen, *Homily on the Forty Martyrs*; St. John Chrysostom, in Photius, *Bibliotheca*, no. 274; St. Ephrem, *Orat. 26*, etc. The collation of these different homilies with the Acts of the martyrs (*Acta sanctorum*, March I, 19) makes it possible to reconstruct an exact account.

⁶⁸ Allard, *op. cit.*, V, 309.

light." Licinius received Constantine's complaint with ill grace, and he then found a pretext for declaring war on him. The battle of Chrysopolis (September 18, 323) and Licinius' death the next year, with which Constantine probably had something to do,⁶⁹ ended the despot's tyranny. Constantine, now sole master of the Empire, could everywhere carry out his policy of religious freedom.

⁶⁹ There is every indication that Constantine really instigated this crime. If such be the case, it is a blemish that history must lament in the life of that great man.

CHAPTER III

Religious Unity

Constantine's Policy

CONSTANTINE, after his victory over Licinius, issued a decree from which we quote the following passage:

"My design then was, first, to bring the diverse judgments formed by all nations respecting the Deity to a condition, as it were, of settled uniformity; and, secondly, to restore a healthy tone to the system of the world, then suffering under the malignant power of a grievous distemper. Keeping these objects in view, I looked forward to the accomplishment of the one with the secret gaze of the mental eye, while the other I endeavored to secure by the aid of military power. For I was aware that, if I should succeed in establishing, according to my hopes, a common harmony of sentiment among all the servants of God, the general course of affairs would also experience a change corresponding to the pious desires of them all."¹

Constantine's whole policy is set forth in these words. This great man is aware of a twofold duty: that of head of the State, charged with maintaining the unity of the Empire, and that of God's instrument whose mission it is to spread the Christian revelation.² These two duties appeared to him not merely reconcilable, but quite harmonious. The unity of the Empire and the unity of religion naturally strengthened each

¹ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, II, 65.

² His conviction that he was the instrument of God appears particularly in the proclamation to the Orientals. It is quoted by Eusebius, *op. cit.*, II, 55.

other. Does the Emperor thus disavow his programme of religious liberty so recently proclaimed at Milan? Not at all; for that régime of liberty did not exclude the desire to seek religious unity; and the pursuit of unity, so clearly manifested in this present decree, was not opposed to the broadest tolerance and respect for his word given in 313. In 323 he writes:

“Let those who are still blinded by error be made welcome to the same degree of peace and tranquillity which they have who believe. For it may be that this restoration of equal privileges to all will have a powerful effect in leading them into the path of truth. Let no one molest another in this matter, but let every one be free to follow the bias of his own mind. . . . Let none use that to the detriment of another which he may himself have received on conviction of its truth; but let every one, if it be possible, apply what he has understood and known to the benefit of his neighbor; if otherwise, let him relinquish the attempt. For it is one thing voluntarily to undertake the conflict for immortality, another to compel others to do so from the fear of punishment.”³

These last words show the depth of Constantine's thought. He did not profess religious indifference. For him Christianity was the truth, paganism error; but he attempted to spread the truth only by persuasion and mildness, and pursued error by force only in so far as demanded by the requirements of morality and public order. This plan, it is true, was not followed in every instance. Impelled by resentment or exulting in success, Constantine did not always respect the limits he had so wisely laid down. Especially after the Nicene Council, elated over its triumph, he sometimes violated the rights of the Church and sometimes those of individual consciences. But our present purpose is to set forth the beginning of his religious policy. During this period he was faithful to the principles of his first decrees.

³ Eusebius, *op. cit.*, II, 56, 60.

Basilicas

Constantine's chief concern was to promote the progress and magnificence of the Christian religion with all his power. After the Edict of Milan, the Christians' first thought was to raise up to God, on a soil so long defiled by idolatrous sacrifices, temples where at last their thanksgivings would resound without restraint. Until then their worship had to be celebrated in poor chapels; they had to seek protection in some friendly house, or, in times of great danger, to take refuge in the earth, near the tombs of the dead. On the remains of sanctuaries destroyed by the persecution, in places consecrated by the blood of the martyrs or the presence of their venerated relics, and on the site of the catacombs, there quickly arose temples of vast size, adorned with marvelous art. The ancient chapels and crypts would not have sufficed for the solemnity of public worship. The Emperor made most generous gifts to the churches and exempted from taxes the artists engaged in their construction. Architecture, sculpture, and painting, which figured to no small extent in the spread of immorality and superstition, were thus put at the service of the Church of Christ.

The *Liber Pontificalis* mentions the basilicas that were then built, like immense and superb shrines, over the tombs of St. Peter at the Vatican, of St. Paul on the Via Ostia, of St. Lawrence on the Via Nomentana, of SS. Peter and Marcellinus on the Via Labicana.⁴ The basilicas erected over the tombs of St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. Lawrence were owing to the Emperor's munificence. Empress Fausta had already made a gift to the papacy of her Lateran palace, beside which was built the basilica of the same name. Constantine's mother, Helena, who had a villa on the Via Labicana, erected an elegant

⁴ Duchesne, *Lib. pont.*, I, 178-182.

basilica on the tombs of the martyrs Peter and Marcellinus; later, after her return from Palestine, she built near another of her villas, to house the relics of the Passion, the *Domus Sessoriana*, or Sessorian Basilica, which soon was called the Holy Cross of Jerusalem. Constantina, the Emperor's daughter, erected the basilica of St. Agnes on the Via Nomentana, beside another imperial villa which she especially liked; and it may be that the Church of St. Anastasia, built at the foot of the Palatine, owes its name to one of Constantine's sisters.

The Lateran Basilica

The most celebrated of these basilicas was that of the Lateran, first called the Constantinian Church, the mother church, consecrated to Christ the Savior, before being dedicated to St. John the Baptist in the tenth century. "During the celebration of the dedication, there appeared in clouds above the high altar the face of the Redeemer surrounded by rays of light: a majestic and gentle face. Its features were perpetuated in mosaic in the apse of the impressive basilica. Nothing remains of the first basilica, which was razed by an earthquake at the end of the ninth century. But the *Liber Pontificalis* enumerates the wonders of art that were contained in this temple, which had a rather austere exterior.⁵ The baldachin of the high altar was the gift of the Emperor; it was a colossal piece of goldsmith's work, in which silver figures, five feet high, with jewels for eyes, represented the Savior surrounded by the Apostles and angels. The inner vaulting of this silver baldachin was of purest gold. A golden lamp weighing fifty pounds hung on chains of twenty-five pounds weight. The seven altars of the basilica were likewise

⁵ Duchesne has shown the great archeological value of the document used by the *Liber pontificalis*. It gives specific details: the kind of metal, the number of precious stones, the size and weight of the sculptures.

of silver, and there was a prodigious number of liturgical vessels, many of them incrustated with jewels.”⁶

The Lateran Basilica never was a special *title*, that is, it was not a parish church. It was the church of the bishop of Rome. There every Sunday the pope celebrated the liturgy in the course of which he sent part of the consecrated bread, the *fermentum*, to the priests of the titular churches, as a mark of their communion with him. At the Lateran it was that thenceforth took place the ordinations and the formal reconciliation of public penitents. Holy Saturday night the Baptism of catechumens was solemnly administered in its baptistry, the only one then existing for Rome.

The religious life of the people was displayed principally in the titular churches. Exact documents show that, in the fourth century, the Christians attended the Eucharistic oblation and received communion there; for it was the rule for no one to attend the Eucharist without participating in it.⁷ The titular churches were also the places where the Sacrament of Penance was privately administered and marriages were celebrated; there also, on the days of penance, took place those particular prayer meetings that were called “stations.”⁸

The Catacombs

Consequent upon the building of so many churches, the importance of the cemeteries or catacombs diminished; but they still figured in the organization of worship. No one could forget those venerable places, the cradle of the early Church. Even in the time of Pope St. Dionysius there was an undeniable relation between the cemeteries and the titles or parishes. After the edict of Gallienus, cemeteries and titles were

⁶ A. Pératé, *Le Vatican*, pp. 412 f.

⁷ Cardinal Rampolla establishes this point in his *Life of St. Melania the Younger*.

⁸ On the “stations,” see Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, pp. 228 ff.

divided among the priests, at the same time that parish lines were delimited, to the number of twenty-five. From that time forward the catacombs were served, not by a special clergy, but by the parish clergy, each title being responsible for one or more cemeteries.⁹

Moreover, the peace of the Church introduced new conditions for the catacombs. St. Miltiades was the last pope to be buried in the catacombs. St. Sylvester is buried in a basilica. Many of these basilicas were constructed above cemeteries, their base sometimes being at the level of the martyrs' tombs, sometimes at a higher level. But often this arrangement entailed the wrecking or destruction or disappearance of considerable parts of the ancient catacombs. At times the only change was an enlargement of a little room containing the saint's tomb or a provision to admit more daylight. Or the desire to honor an illustrious martyr would bring about more radical arrangements. In order to reach the level where the martyr's body rested, the catacomb was sometimes laid bare down to the first or second story underground. This expeditious method was used in several places, for example, for the tomb of St. Peter at the Vatican, of St. Paul on the Via Ostia, of St. Lawrence at the *Agro Verano*, and of St. Agnes on the Via Nomentana.¹⁰

Constantine's princely generosity reached to the provinces. At Ostium, at Alba, at Naples, at Capua, at Cirta in Numidia, imperial architects raised splendid temples to Christ and His saints. Eusebius describes several churches constructed in the East, notably the immense cathedral built at Tyre, with ceilings of cedar, vaultings of mosaics, altars sparkling with gold and gems, all of which aroused universal admiration.

The imperial favor was shown in a very particular way in

⁹ Leclercq, art. "*Catacombes*," in the *Dict. d'archéol. chrét.*

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, II, col. 2433. Pope St. Damasus devoted great care to remedying the ruinous effect of these undertakings.

the glorification of the holy places of Palestine. Pilgrimages to the Holy Land had been frequent before the persecution of Diocletian;¹¹ they greatly increased after peace was established. The exact spot of the crucifixion was identified, as also of the Ascension, the grotto of Bethlehem, and many other sites venerated as having witnessed the fundamental mysteries of Christianity; and memorial churches were erected there. At Antioch, the place where tradition located the first establishment of the Christians, a large basilica was erected.

Christian Architecture

Thus Christian architecture was born. Probably before Constantine the Christians possessed, besides the catacombs and private residences placed at the service of public worship, a certain number of churches. The edict of Gallienus (261) and Aurelian's decision (272) regarding the church in Antioch presuppose that the Christians possessed buildings especially intended for religious worship.¹² But historians have left us no data about their architectonic forms. From allusions in the *Didascalia*, the *Apostolic Constitutions*, and the *Testament of Our Lord*, we may suppose that the churches before Constantine's time were inspired by the profane basilica, a public edifice usually built on a forum, where the people met to discuss their legal or commercial affairs.¹³ These churches contained a single nave, with an atrium, a peristyle, and two entrances, one for men and the other for women.¹⁴ This is about all we know with regard to them.¹⁵

¹¹ Eusebius speaks of these pilgrimages in his *Proof of the Gospel*, VI, xviii. But that book was written before Constantine visited the East.

¹² This fact is evidenced by the mention of the destruction of the basilica of Edessa in 302, of the basilicas at Tyre and Nicomedia in 303, and, in the same year, the placing under seal of the churches of Heraclea and Cirta.

¹³ See the word "Basilica" in Du Cange.

¹⁴ *Didascalia*, chap. 12; *Constit. apost.*, bk. 2, chap. 57; *Testament of Our Lord* (*alias, Epistle of the Apostles*).

¹⁵ Leclercq, art. "*Basilique*," in the *Dict. d'archéol. chrét.*

The Constantinian church evidently adopted the basilica type. It was quite natural that it should. Thus there was no break with habits already formed. Besides temples, almost the only form of public edifice known to architects and builders was the basilica; its use for purely civic purposes did not make Christians feel that aversion which they felt for the pagan temples.

The ground plan of a basilica was an oblong, two or three times as long as it was wide. Two rows of columns divided it into three naves. Ordinarily its length was divided into three sections: the lower part of the naves was occupied by the general public; half-way up the naves was the transept, reserved for lawyers, court officers, etc.; at the far end of the central nave was the apse, where the judgment seat was located.

In the Christian basilica, the naves were for the laity. Separate parts were assigned to the men, the women, the penitents, and the catechumens. In the transept were the lower clergy; since they sang psalms there and chanted the office, that part of the edifice was called *chorus* (choir). At the far end of the apse was placed the seat reserved for the bishop, and on both sides of this were seats for the priests, whence the name *presbyterium*, given to this part of the basilica.

The altar was located at the entrance to the apse, or at the upper end of the choir. It consisted of an oblong marble slab, resting upon one, four, or five supports, and decorated with various ornaments.¹⁶ Sometimes use was made of abandoned pagan monuments, which were covered by a marble slab.¹⁷

¹⁶ Bour, in the *Dict. de théol.*, V, col. 1207; Leclercq, in the *Dict. d'archéol.*, I, col. 3158.

¹⁷ De Rossi, *Bullett. di archeol.*, 1877, plates 3 and 4; Leclercq, *op. cit.*, I, cols. 3175 ff. When we say that the profane basilica was a prototype of the Christian basilica, we are not excluding other influences. We follow the traditional view, set forth in a scholarly way by Léon-Baptiste Alberti in the sixteenth century. The question of the architectural origin of Christian basilicas has been controverted ever since. Zestermann's contention, that the Christian basilica was something altogether new in architecture, has not won many supporters. Martigny

In a general way many fragments of former buildings were employed in the construction of the basilicas, for example, shafts and capitals. "The ancient Christian basilicas of Rome are merely a reassemblage of ancient fragments."¹⁸ This statement seems a little too broad, but the truth contained in it may be verified by a study of the primitive parts of early basilicas, nearly all constructed or restored at periods more or less distant. But we should not, therefore, suppose that the use of foreign materials notably injured the purity of style of the Constantinian churches. De Broglie remarks that at that period, when pagan architecture experienced a notable decadence of taste, when art was characterized by the venturesome combination of diverse styles and by a search for a heavy and unlovely bigness, as in the baths of Diocletian and Constantine's arch of triumph, "the Christian churches preserved a particular and impressive character. Nearly all were built on a similar model, offering the symbol of order reborn in the midst of a general dissolution."¹⁹ All the luxury which a converted civilization heaped up in these temples did not result in destroying their general simplicity, the spontaneous fruit of Christian inspiration. Thus, instead of adopting the model

was the last to hold that the Christian basilica owes its origin to the chapels in the catacombs. We cannot enter into a discussion of the theories that the basilica is to be traced back to the mortuary chapels or the Jewish synagogues. Nor has the explanation been accepted that the model of the basilica is to be found in the arrangement of certain rooms in private houses. De Lasteyrie, in his monumental history of religious architecture in France, after devoting a whole chapter to the discussion of these different theories, says: "The origin of the basilicas is more complex than is generally supposed. From the basilica of the ancient forum are taken the oblong shape, the division into parallel galleries, and especially the elevation of the middle gallery to facilitate the lighting of the interior from above. From public meeting-places, and perhaps from mortuary structures, was taken the idea of the apse. From private houses was borrowed the atrium and the long preserved practice of joining various subsidiary structures to the church building, without any concern as to whether the external appearance of the church would be harmed thereby." (Lasteyrie, *op. cit.*, I, 70.)

¹⁸ Viollet-le-Duc, *Dict. d'architecture*.

¹⁹ De Broglie, *L'Eglise et l'empire*, II, 168.

of the vaulted basilica, the Church generally preferred that of the basilica with timbered ceiling supported on a line of arches. Thus "in its principal lines it kept the rural appearance of a vast barn. It might be looked upon as the stable of Bethlehem, enriched by the presents of the Magi." ²⁰

The Liturgy

The same character, at once solemn and sumptuous, marked the liturgical ceremonies, now openly displayed.

Baptism was conferred in separate chapels or baptistries, constructed near the churches. The Lateran baptistry received Constantine's most generous gifts. "The cover of the porphyry piscina was of silver; in the middle rose a porphyry column bearing a golden lamp, in which, during the Easter festivities, two hundred pounds of balm were burned. On the edge of the piscina was a golden lamb, from the mouth of which the water poured out; to the right of this was a silver image of the Savior, five feet high and weighing 170 pounds; to the left, a like statue of St. John the Baptist, holding a standard with the inscription, '*Ecce agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi*'; in fine, seven silver statues of deer from which water likewise poured into the baptismal basin." ²¹ The deer symbolized the catechumens' desire to quench their thirst in the water of life and salvation. The basin sometimes was made in the shape of a tomb to symbolize the mystical death of the baptized.

The baptistries were spacious enough to permit the conferring of Baptism on a large number of catechumens at one time. At first this ceremony took place with great solemnity on the feasts of Easter and Pentecost only. Soon the feast of Epiphany was added; then Baptism was given on all the great

²⁰ *Idem*, II, 178.

²¹ Pératé, *Le Vatican, les papes et la civilisation*, p. 413. Cf. Martigny, art. "*Baptistère*," in the *Dict. des antiq. chrét.*

feasts.²² The catechumens who were judged worthy to enter the Church through the baptismal initiation had to prepare themselves by forty days of prayer and fasting, by special examinations called *scrutinia*, and by exorcisms. Solemn Baptism was conferred so far as possible by the bishop himself. The essential rite was always, following the primitive usage, the threefold immersion, in memory of the Holy Trinity and of the three days which Christ passed in the tomb. Yet there were exceptions to this rule, even aside from the Baptism of the sick: the Spaniards used only one immersion. Among the secondary ceremonies there was the placing of a little salt on the lips, the touching of the ears while uttering the word "Ephpheta," the anointing, the laying on of a white tunic, the recitation of the symbol of faith, and, in Italy, the offering of a coin, recalling the talent entrusted by God to the neophyte. It all combined to make the initiated understand the importance and greatness of the step he had just taken, of the graces he would receive. Now that the profession of Christianity no longer exposed a baptized person to martyrdom, and since, on the contrary, it might become in civil life a title to public consideration, it was more necessary than ever to remind all, by the most expressive ceremonies, of the eminent dignity of the Sacrament which makes us children of the Church, and the serious duties it imposes.

The Ceremonies of the Mass

Like reasons justified the new solemnity given to the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. In the time of Constantine the Eucharist was no longer an impressive "breaking of bread," furtively celebrated among brethren, gathered for

²² In the thirtieth year of Constantine's reign the practice was introduced at Jerusalem of baptizing on the day of the dedication of the Church of Calvary. Later on, Baptism was conferred on the feasts of the martyrs. (St. Leo, *Ep.* 168, no. 1.)

the "repast of love" in the upper room of a friendly house. It was no longer a sacrifice offered in the gloom of the catacombs by the light of smoky lamps, on the still fresh tomb of a martyr. It was the solemn action of the divine immolation, commemorated and renewed in a well-lighted basilica amid all the pomp of riches and art, laid at the feet of the Master of the world.

Archeological and patristic documents enable us to reconstruct the liturgy of a solemn Mass celebrated in the basilica of the Lateran in Constantine's time. No change was made in any of the essential ceremonies that we have already considered. There was a modification only in the setting and in a few accessory ceremonies.

As soon as a Christian, raising the light canvas curtain which covered the doorway, entered the basilica,²³ his eye was dazzled by thousands of lights from candelabra, lamps, and perfume-burners, sending forth their rays in various directions over his head, casting countless reflections on the gilded decorations, on the canopy of hammered silver over the high altar, on the precious stones that adorned the statues, altars, and sacred vessels.

At the far end of the nave, sitting in a chair of imposing dimensions, is the head of the Church of Rome, to his right and left are his priests seated, and his deacons standing. These last, clothed in simple *colobium*, a sort of light tunic held in at the waist by a *cingulum*, are ready to carry out the bishop's instructions for the direction of the ceremonies. "When thou callest the assembly of the church," says the *Apostolic Constitutions* to the bishop, "as one that is the commander of a great ship, appoint the assemblies to be made with all possible skill, charging the deacons to prepare places for the brethren with all due care and decency." ²⁴

²³ Constantine, by granting the "right of asylum" to the basilicas, intended that no door should stop the flight of a condemned person seeking refuge at the foot of the altar.

²⁴ *Apostolic Constitutions*, bk. 2, chap. 57.

The deacons leave the apse and go to and fro in the nave: they see that the "weepers" (Christians doing penance) remain in the outer porch; they assign places to the "hearers" at the rear of the basilica; they allow the "competents"²⁵ to come further up in the church; they keep an eye on the possessed persons, who are relegated to a far corner, and on all those who might fail to observe proper decorum.

During the Mass of the Catechumens, the first deacon dismisses successively the hearers, the possessed, and the competents until the faithful alone remain.²⁶

After giving the kiss of peace to one another, men and women separately, they bring their offerings to the altar, thus carrying out the Savior's command:

"If thou offerest thy gift at the altar, and there thou rememberest that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother; and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift."

The crowd spreads out in a long, silent procession. First the men come forward, each one carrying his offering, more or less costly according to his wealth. The gifts are received in baskets or large amphorae called *amae*. From the *Liber Pontificalis* we know that Constantine gave the Lateran two *amae* of pure gold, weighing fifty pounds apiece, and twenty silver *amae*, weighing ten pounds apiece. Each person, as he passed by the baskets and *amphorae*, bowed, deposited his offering, and then resumed his place in the procession. After

²⁵ The name "*competentes*" was given to those catechumens who were being prepared for the reception of Baptism.

²⁶ For a long time it was supposed (without proof) that the penitents, like the catechumens, were dismissed after the didactic portion of the Divine Office (Petau, *De poenit. vet.*). This error was successfully refuted by Hugo Koch (*Theologische Quartalschrift*, 1900, pp. 481-534). But it is true that a special part of the church was assigned to the penitents. (D'Alès, art. "*Limen ecclesiae*," in the *Revue d'hist. eccl.*, 1902, pp. 16-26.)

the men came the women, the deaconesses, the virgins. The married women generally wore a *stola*, the virgins a head-band. The deacons, standing behind the *amphorae*, were vested in golden dalmatics. In the baskets and *amphorae* they carried the bread and wine needed for the consecration.

The most solemn moment of the sacrifice draws near. Two deacons stand before the altar, each of them holding a large fan, or *flabellum*, which they use to keep away the flies that might otherwise fall into the chalice. The celebrant wears a *paenula* (chasuble) over the cinctured tunic. He consecrates the bread and wine according to the rite which we considered above.²⁷

The communion ceremonies varied but little. Communion is distributed at the "chancel," or communion table, located between the back of the nave and the transept. The floor in this part was inlaid work of precious marble.²⁸ The people stand to receive the consecrated bread, which the deacon puts in their hand, and they themselves place it in their mouth. The precious blood is distributed to them separately in a chalice.

While the people thus partook of the Eucharistic banquet in a manner at once informal and august, the choir sang the thirty-third Psalm of David: "I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall be always in my mouth. . . . Taste and see that the Lord is sweet." And the thanksgiving continued to the end of the liturgical ceremony.²⁹

And it continued even outside the basilica, for we have numerous evidences that, "in the fourth century, Christians in the East as well as in the West, of all ages and conditions, sang psalms every day, whether in public or in private."³⁰

²⁷ See *supra*, pp. 31, 89 f., 283 f.

²⁸ Cedrenus relates that, in the great church at Constantinople, Constantine paved this portion of the floor with onyx.

²⁹ See Rohault de Fleury, *La Messe*; Hoppenot, *La Messe*; Cabrol, *La Prière antique*.

³⁰ Martigny, art. "*Liturgie*," in the *Dict. des antiq. chrét.*

Saint Paula relates that in her time "the farmer at his plow used to sing the *alleluia*; the sweating harvester lightened his labor with the singing of the psalms; the vintager, wielding the curved pruning-knife, chanted some snatch of Davidic poetry."³¹

This holy enthusiasm surely spread to the pagans. From Eusebius we learn that the crowd, charmed by the beauties of the liturgy, repaired to the baptistries, asking for and receiving "the mystic symbols of our Savior's Passion."³²

The Roman Religion in the Time of Constantine

Yet the pagan peril continued. No doubt, "when Constantine placed Christianity on the throne with him, and changed the whole religious policy of the Roman Empire, the religion from which for the first time the sovereign publicly withdrew, was nothing more than a semblance of what it had been in previous centuries; and it would remain rather the respected symbol of Roman unity than the real religious center of the nations."³³ But, by becoming the capital of the world, Rome in a way became its Pantheon. The gods taken from the Sabines and from Latium, the more brilliant and less chaste divinities imagined by the genius of Greece, the Oriental Baals and the Alexandrian myths, all were mingled and confused in the popular imagination and worship. In this immense ambiguity which was then covered by the name of Roman religion, some chosen souls found the way of purification that led them to the portal of Christianity; but the masses found therein especially the means of more freely satisfying their passions. Sometimes the contrast of a life engaged in devout practices and at the same time stained with the most degraded

³¹ St. Jerome, *Opera*, IV, 351. Cf. St. Augustine, *Enarr. in psalmos*, 85.

³² Eusebius, *H. E.*, X, iii.

³³ Allard, "*Le Paganisme romain au IV^e siècle*," in the *Revue des quest. hist.*, 1892, p. 345.

vices, was to be found in the same person. "This curious mixture is observed in studying the paintings and inscriptions of a famous profane catacomb on the Via Appia. On the tomb of a priest of Sabazios, an epitaph of the lowest and grossest Epicurean philosophy is carved at the side of paintings recalling the loftiest myths of paganism and even Christian symbols. Opposite are frescoes on a Mithraist's tomb, showing him invested with the rank of *miles*, the possession of which stirred the members' fervor to heroism and almost to martyrdom. But these same frescoes also contain one of the vilest symbols of the worship of the indecent Cotytto. A little farther on, the tomb of a priest of *Sol Invictus* has an epitaph in which this minister of a purification worship is praised for having given his pupils lessons in voluptuousness." ³⁴ Notwithstanding heresies and schisms, the Christian religion, by its lofty doctrine and pure morals and solid hierarchy, appeared the firmest basis of society; at the same time and to that extent paganism, despite the character and high ideas of some of its members, became more and more the agglomeration of all superstitions and immoralities, and showed itself to be the most formidable influence of dissolution. This Constantine understood.

Without belying his pledged word given at Milan, to respect the liberty of paganism as a religion, he decided to attack whatever seemed to him manifestly immoral, scandalously superstitious, or seriously menacing to public peace in its manifestations. The temples of Aegae in Cilicia and of Aphaca in Phenicia were demolished because they were used for orgiastic celebrations; that of Heliopolis, because custom had transformed it into a "place of ill-repute." The temple of Delphi, probably for a similar reason, was stripped of its statues. Eusebius assures us that the Emperor went even farther. He mentions a law forbidding the setting up of idols,

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 350.

the practice of divination, and the offering of idolatrous sacrifice.³⁵ The text of this law has not been preserved. Apparently it was aimed at ceremonies performed in private houses, because worship was not abolished in the temples in any general way.³⁶ In many places, converted *en masse* to Christianity, the people of their own accord smashed their former idols and razed their temples. Stripping the statues of gems and precious vestments, they pointed out to the idols' remaining followers the decayed wood that was hidden beneath these splendid coverings, and repeated the verses of the Psalm:

"They have mouths and speak not; they have eyes and see not; they have ears and hear not. . . . Let them that make them become like unto them, and all such as trust in them." ³⁷

Legal Reforms

Constantine accomplished something more profound. He strove to inject the Christian spirit into the Roman law. Frederick Ozanam, in one of his most penetrating studies, notes the radical opposition between the pagan and the Christian law. In the pagan law he distinguishes three profound defects. First, the pagan law was the intangible and almost sacred domain of a small number of the initiated, the lawyers, who acquired a sort of mysterious and superstitious priesthood from such functions.³⁸ A second defect of the pagan law, consequent upon the first, was to give it a power, "not only over possessions and life, but also over souls and conscience. Rome be-

³⁵ *Life of Constantine*, I, xlv; IV, xxiii and xxv.

³⁶ De Broglie, *L'Eglise et l'empire*, I, 462-467; Duchesne, *op. cit.*, II, 61. However, it is also true that Constantine tolerated superstitious practices and even issued decrees for their regulation.

³⁷ Eusebius, *op. cit.*, III, lvii.

³⁸ "*Jus est ars boni et aequi, cujus merito quis nos sacerdotes appellet.*" (Ulpian, *Digest*, "*De justitia et jure*," bk. I, tit. I, sec. I.)

ing deified, her will was divine, legitimate.”³⁹ “A third serious defect of the pagan law was that frightful inequality which all the efforts of conscience were unable to overcome.”⁴⁰ According to Roman law, woman was held in tutelage all her life; a son at birth was subject to the law of sale and even to abandonment; lower down the scale, slaves were without any rights at all.⁴¹

This Roman law, when codified by the immortal pen of Gaius and Ulpian, had the beauty of the finest monuments of old Rome. But, Ozanam concludes, it reminds one too much of the Colosseum, a fine structure, where men were thrown to the lions.⁴²

The Constantinian law did not bring about a complete change in the prescriptions that violated Christianity and morality. A sudden transformation was impossible. But to Constantine we must trace the blessed juridical evolution which terminated in the Theodosian Code. “Constantine introduced three great novelties. First, an effort to give the law a character of publicity and sincerity. With Constantius disappeared the sacramental formularies of wills, of contracts, and of several acts of civil law. There also disappeared what the emperors called *aucupatio syllabarum*, that is, the sacramental syllables and the rest of juridical subtleties.”⁴³ Secondly, the temporal and the spiritual were not confused. Constantine, when appealed to by the Donatists to adjudicate a religious question, wrote to the Catholic bishops:

“They have made an appeal, as is done in the law suits of the pagans. . . . They ask judgment from me, who am myself waiting

³⁹ Ozanam, *La Civilisation au V^e siècle*, I, 261.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 265.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 271.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 276.

⁴³ Ozanam, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-277.

for the judgment of Christ. For I declare—as is true—that the judgment of bishops ought to be looked upon as if the Lord Himself were sitting in judgment.”⁴⁴

Constantine also began to rectify the inequality which looked upon women, children, and slaves as juridically incomplete persons. He gave mothers a more important place in the matter of inheritances from their children.⁴⁵ They became their children’s legal guardians.⁴⁶ The marriage bond recovered part of its dignity by the limitation of legal grounds for divorce.⁴⁷ In May, 315, the Emperor wrote: “Let a law be promptly posted in all the cities of Italy, to deter parents from laying murderous hands on their newborn infants.” A few years later (321), he wrote: “We have learned that in the provinces, because of the scarcity of food, people are selling and pledging their own children. We order that parents who are without personal resources be succored by our treasury.” Henceforth the law punishes the murder of a son by a parent with the same penalty as provided for parricide. Lastly, the law punishes by death those who put one of their slaves to death.

Constantine in every possible way facilitated the freeing of slaves. Whoever, in the presence of the assembled people or in a church, declared his slave free, was considered to have fulfilled all the formalities by which Roman citizenship is conferred. By two imperial constitutions, “the Church was entrusted with a sort of official patronage for the enfranchisement of mankind. Consecrated localities were made places of refuge and exempt places. Now empowered to promote and to receive all kinds of emancipations, outside any legal formal-

⁴⁴ *The Acts of the Vindication of Felix* (in *The Works of St. Optatus against the Donatists*, Appendix 5, pp. 396 f.).

⁴⁵ *Theodosian Code*, bk. 5, tit. 1, “*De legitimis haereditatibus*.”

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, bk. 2, tit. 17, “*De his qui veniam aetatis impetrarunt*.”

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, bk. 3, tit. 16, “*De repudiis*.”

ties or any legal hindrances, the bishops henceforth exercised the full weight of their religious authority in behalf of emancipation. Yet they had to be cautious not to wreck all the machinery of social life and to take into account deeply rooted habits which were maintained by men's passions as well as by their needs. The sudden abolition of slavery would have brought starvation upon ancient society, which depended upon the product of servile labor for the necessities of life. It would have let loose immense populations without guides or resources, incapable of governing themselves. The Church, at that solemn moment, accepted from God and from Emperor Constantine the task of freeing the world without upsetting it." ⁴⁸

St. Helena

The impulse given to the development of Christian worship, the repression of paganism, and the reform of legislation were, after all, merely external influences. They would not have been sufficient to give Christian society the internal force it needed to fulfil its divine mission at the dawn of the era just opening. This force came to it, as always, from a higher and more efficacious principle—holiness.

Holiness was to be found very close to the Emperor. Even when Constantine was surrounding the imperial office with greater pomp and splendor, the Christians used to see coming into their assemblies a humble woman, whose dress in no way distinguished her from the poorest subjects of the Empire. "Only the religious respect shown to her would enable any one to recognize, under these modest appearances, the mother of the mighty Emperor." ⁴⁹

Helena was born about the year 248 in Bithynia, of a lowly

⁴⁸ De Broglie, *op. cit.*, I, 306.

⁴⁹ Rouillon, *Sainte Hélène*, p. 101.

pagan family. St. Jerome tells us that in her youth she was a barmaid. But about 275, a Roman officer, passing through Bithynia with the expedition against the famous Queen Zenobia of Palmyra, fell in love with the charming girl and married her. The officer was Constantius Chlorus. Eighteen years later, having reached the highest ranks of military officialdom, he was called by Emperor Diocletian to share with him the government of the Roman Empire. This event resulted in separating him from her who until then had been his helpmate. Diocletian, to be sure of the new prince's fidelity, required him to repudiate Helena and to marry the daughter-in-law of his colleague, Maximian Hercules.

The experience was salutary for the poor repudiated wife; she tempered her soul in the endurance of unmerited suffering. When, later, the son of Constantius and Helena, Constantine, a convert to Christianity and now sole master of the Empire, called his beloved mother to him, Helena was ready to embrace the teachings of the religion of Christ. Eusebius informs us that the Emperor himself became its apostle. "He rendered her through his influence so devout a worshipper of God (though not previously so) that she seemed to have been instructed from the first by the Savior of mankind." We have no details as to the fruitful and prudent influence which Helena exercised upon her august son. We know that the Emperor opened the imperial treasury to her and that she made use of the opportunity to aid the poor and to build churches. We may justly suppose that her charitable inspiration had much to do with many of the laws enacted by Constantine for the benefit of the lowly, the suffering, slaves, and prisoners. When almost eighty years old, she journeyed to Palestine and enkindled in the Church the devotion to the Savior's cross. The voice of the people quickly venerated her with the title of saint.

The Fathers of the Desert

In the beginning of the fourth century, holiness, with exceptional vitality, spread out into the deserts of the East. There was no persecution shedding the blood of Christians; but the Church's reserves of heroism were not exhausted. Souls desirous of a more perfect life set out for the solitudes where Paul and Antony had fixed their abodes. "The persecution made less solitaries than did the peace and triumph of the Church. The Christians, simple and opposed to any softness, were more fearful of a peace that might be gratifying to the senses than they had been of the cruelty of the tyrants. The deserts became peopled with countless angels, who lived in mortal bodies without being of the earth."⁵⁰

In 305, Antony of Heraclea, leaving the lofty aerie which he had made his retreat in the neighborhood of Memphis, founded the semi-eremetical life in the vicinity of the Red Sea.⁵¹ Up to that time the hermits had lived isolated in mud huts, or in little cabins made of wood or stone. Some had found it simpler to use natural caves, burial grottos of the ancient Egyptians, or abandoned tombs outside of cities. Others there were who considered even the humblest habitation superfluous and lived in the open air.⁵² Several of them who had visited Antony to ask his advice, were impressed by his wisdom. They came to him and settled in the vicinity. Antony became the chief and father of all the anchorites of the Thebaid, who found new stimulus for their fervor in the periodical gatherings held under his presidency.

The fame of the patriarch grew. Pagans, Platonic philosophers, consulted him and were struck by the depth of his re-

⁵⁰ Fénelon, *Discours sur les avantages et les devoirs de la vie religieuse* (*Œuvres*, Versailles ed., XVII, 396).

⁵¹ At the spot where the Monastery of St. Antony still stands.

⁵² Besse, *D'où viennent les moines*, p. 53; cfr. Besse, *Les Moines d'Orient*.

plies. The saintly hermit was fond especially of talking about the essence of God and the Trinity of the divine Persons, the Incarnation and death of one of those Persons for the salvation of the world. Emperor Constantine wrote to him as to a father, recommending the future of the Empire to his prayers. At sight of him popular enthusiasm broke out. Unbelievers and even priests of the idols ran after him, calling out: "Let us see the man of God!"⁵³ But he rarely appeared, and then furtively, in the midst of the crowds. He said: "As fish die if a man lift them out of the water, so, if we monks prolong our stay with men, do our minds become perverted and troubled; therefore it is meet that, as fish pass their lives beneath the waters, we also should let our lives and works be buried in the wilderness."⁵⁴ "He completed his life there in the midst of an always increasing stream of disciples and pilgrims, who received his instructions in the Egyptian language and who admired the unalterable beauty of his features, which age did not destroy,⁵⁵ and especially his gaiety, his joyous and winning affability, infallible signs of a soul which soars into serene regions."⁵⁶

St. Athanasius, his contemporary and disciple, in his *Life of St. Antony*, gives a summary of the venerable patriarch's teaching. "He stressed perseverance in the exclusive service of God: not to grow lax or neglectful, not to look back toward the world, abandoned for good; one has left so little, even if the whole earth has been given up for solitude. We must do our daily task, without solicitude for the morrow, with trust in the grace of God."⁵⁷

His rules for the discerning of spirits are quite remarkable. A thousand years later, St. Ignatius Loyola, condensing the

⁵³ St. Athanasius, *Life of St. Antony*, chap. 42.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, chap. 53.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, chaps. 13 and 40.

⁵⁶ Montalembert, *Monks of the West*, I, 308.

⁵⁷ Cavallera, *Saint Athanase*, p. 331.

fruit of his own reading and experience, sets down the same ideas, sometimes in the same words, as the Father of the Eastern monks. St. Antony's rules, as recorded by St. Augustine, are as follows:

"The discernment of good and evil spirits is possible and easy by the grace of God. The sight of the saints is not disturbing. 'He shall not cry, . . . neither shall his voice be heard abroad.' It takes place quietly and gently, at once bringing joy and confidence to the soul. This is because the Lord is with them, He who is our joy and the power of God the Father. The mind remains at peace, is unperturbed, in such wise that the soul beholds, in a calm light, those who appear to it. It is filled with a desire for divine things and future blessings, and a wish to be united with them, if it could go with them. If some persons, since they are human, feel a dread at sight of the good spirits, the apparition of the latter removes all fear by their charity. Thus it is that Gabriel acts toward Zachary; and thus the angel of the sepulcher in appearing to the holy women. The fear aroused by their appearance does not come from timidity, but from awareness of the presence of a higher being. Such is the vision of the saints. The sudden appearance of evil spirits, on the contrary, is disturbing. It is accompanied by noises, sounds, cries, as of rough boys or robbers. At once the soul becomes fearful. There is a distress and disorder in the mind, depression, hatred for holy persons, melancholy, sadness, remembrance of neighbors, fear of death, lastly a desire for evil, torpor in virtue, and an upsetting of character."⁵⁸

St. Hilarion

Antony's work was continued by Hilarion and Pachomius

⁵⁸ St. Athanasius, *Life of St. Antony*, chap. 18. "What is known as the Rule of St. Antony is a work by some monk of a later period, who took its elements from the Saint's life, from the writings attributed to him, and from the sermons of Abbot Isaias." (Besse, art. "*Antoine*," in Vacant's *Dict. de théol.*)

from 305 to 320. About the year 310, Hilarion made Gaza, a city of Palestine, a center of the eremetical life, modeled on that which St. Antony had established in the Thebaid. "Hilarion," says St. Jerome, "was a native of the town of Tabatha, which is located five miles from Gaza in Palestine. His parents were idolators. They sent him to Alexandria, where he soon gave evidence, considering his age, of talent and character. He was beloved by all and showed a capacity for the art of speaking. Having embraced faith in Jesus, our Lord, he did not feel attracted by the excitement of the circus, or by the bloody games of the arena, or by the immodest dramas of the theater. His only pleasure was in the assembly of the faithful. Having heard mention of the famous Antony, he was kindled with a desire to know the servant of God and set out for the desert. For almost three months he contemplated the regularity of the holy Patriarch's life and the seriousness of his conduct. . . . When he came back home with a few monks, his parents were dead. His possessions he shared with his brethren and the poor, keeping nothing for himself. Thus stripped of everything, and clad only with the armor of Christ, he penetrated into that desert which, seven miles from Majoma, lies to the left as one goes into Egypt. His frail body he clothed in a skin cloak, which he had received from Antony when leaving him, and a peasant's coat. He settled down in a vast and frightful wilderness, between the sea and the marsh, limiting his daily food to fifteen dry figs, which he ate after sunset. The devil made appeal to his senses. But the young man struck his breast all the harder to drive away evil thoughts by bruising his body. He was assiduous at prayer; he sang psalms. He plowed the ground. He weaved grass baskets, after the example of the monks of Egypt and in accord with St. Paul's words: 'If any man will not work, neither let him eat.' "

Many temptations assailed him; and many were the snares which the demons laid for him night and day. But many also

were the miracles which God gave him the grace to perform: the curing of sick people, the driving out of demons, the taming of wild beasts.⁵⁹ The report of his miracles and virtues drew to him multitudes of visitors, who brought sick persons and demoniacs, or who merely asked him to bless them. But, continues his biographer, "he wept every day, remembering with inconceivable regret the solitary life which he used formerly to lead. 'I have returned to the world,' he said. 'Alas, I have received my reward in this life.' Let others admire his miracles," says St. Jerome, "let them admire his knowledge and his austerity. What amazes me is his contempt for glory and honors. Bishops and priests came to him in his retreat, clergy and monks flocked to him, and many Christian ladies, not to mention the common people of the cities and country. Men in high position and officials came, too. But he longed only for solitude." He died at the age of eighty years. "While his breast scarcely held a trace of warmth, he opened his eyes and said: 'Go forth, what do you fear, go forth, my soul, why do you hesitate? For nigh on seventy years you have been serving Christ, and do you dread death?' With these words he breathed forth his spirit."⁶⁰

St. Pachomius

The manner of life adopted by St. Hilarion and the Palestinian monks who placed themselves under his leadership did not differ from the régime followed by St. Antony and his Egyptian monks. St. Pachomius marks a further step in the organization of the monastic life. To him we owe the foundation of the common or cenobitical life in Upper Egypt.⁶¹

Pachomius was born in the vicinity of Esna, not far from

⁵⁹ For these miracles, see St. Jerome, *Vita S. Hilarionis*.

⁶⁰ These fragments of St. Jerome's writings may be found in his *Vie d'Hilarion*, translated by De Labriolle.

⁶¹ From *κοινός* (common) and *βίος* (life).

Thebes.⁶² Entering the imperial army when he was twenty years old, he was impressed by the charity with which Christians gave away food that was indispensable to soldiers on the march. Never had he seen anything like this among the pagans. Taking pains to learn something about the character and the religion of his benefactors, he found that they devoted themselves to these works of mercy out of love for Jesus Christ, God made man, and the Savior of men. Then, says his biographer, Pachomius addressed the following prayer to God: "My God, who hast made Heaven and earth, if Thou wilt deign to make known to me how I ought to serve Thee, I promise to follow Thy will, and with love of all men, conformably to Thy commands, I will perform all the offices of charity toward them."⁶³

As soon as he left the military service, Pachomius withdrew to the village of Shenesit, to a ruin called "the temple of Serapis." There he cultivated a few vegetables and, with the product of his labor, succored the poor of the district and travellers who passed along the highway. But upon hearing of a holy monk who lived not far from this village, he betook himself thither to put himself under his direction. This venerable monk was named Palamon. According to the narrative of an old biographer, Palamon opened the door of his cell a little and said to the stranger: "You cannot become a monk here. Go try elsewhere first. My rule is too severe for a beginner. I fast every day in the summer; during the winter I eat only bread and salt and every second day a vegetable; I pass half the night singing the psalms or meditating on the Scriptures; sometimes I even spend the whole night without sleeping." Pachomius said: "I hope from our Lord Jesus Christ, aided by your prayers, to persevere in this sort of life

⁶² Now Latopolis.

⁶³ This quotation and the various details of St. Pachomius' life are taken from documents cited by Ladeuze, *Études sur le cénobitisme pachôkien*, Paris, 1898.

until death." He was then admitted to share the life of the saintly old man.⁶⁴

Shortly afterwards Pachomius, venturing forth as far as the abandoned village of Tabennesi, heard a voice from Heaven calling to him: "Stay here and build a monastery, for many persons desiring to embrace the monastic life will come to you here." The village of Tabennesi was situated on the eastern bank of the Nile, near the place where the river makes a sharp turn, north of Thebes.⁶⁵ The event took place about 318.⁶⁶ Pachomius obeyed the mysterious voice, and things happened as he had been told.

Such was the origin of the first cenobitical community. Pachomius regarded it as an advance upon the anchoritic life practiced about him. "The life of a cenobite," he said, "is more perfect than that of an anchorite, by reason of the virtues which daily association with the brethren obliges him to practice. Moreover, the brethren are stimulated by seeing the labors and virtues of others. The imperfect exercise us in mortification, and the perfect show us the path we should follow." We must suppose that the isolated life had some disadvantages which were perhaps encouraged by odd or indiscreet practices.⁶⁷

The evolution of the anchoritic into the cenobitical life took place gradually. Pachomius enlarged his dwelling in the measure that additional disciples came to live with him; but many were satisfied to put up huts close by. Pachomius gave them

⁶⁴ A few solitaires, who had settled in the neighborhood, seem to have lived under the spiritual direction of Palamon. But it is a mistake to regard this as a first organization of the cenobitic life. (Ladeuze, *op. cit.*, p. 164.)

⁶⁵ Leclercq, art. "*Cénobitisme*," in the *Dict. d'arch. chrét.*, II, col. 3092.

⁶⁶ Lacot, Introduction to the *Historia Lausiaca* of Palladius, p. iv.

⁶⁷ In the West the development was different. There the cenobitic life appears only as a step toward anchoritism. The Carthusian rule is regarded as a more perfect form of the Benedictine. No doctrinal contradiction is implied in the two movements. The contemplative life is *in se* the highest degree of perfection; but it needs to be safeguarded by protective institutions and probations.

rules as close to his ideal as possible. Thus he persuaded them to put the price of their labors into a common fund and to take their meals together.

When the number of disciples who were resolved to lead the common life reached one hundred, Pachomius built a church in his monastery. Soon, at a little distance from Tabennesi, a second monastery had to be erected at Pbow. A few years later, there were nine such monasteries. Pachomius then moved to Pbow. Thereafter the plenary gatherings were held at Pbow, the headquarters of the new congregation.

It was truly a religious congregation. Each monastery formed as it were a little city, encompassed with walls. Within the enclosure stood several houses, each containing about forty monks, grouped according to the nature of their work. There were also streets and quarters.

The biographer of St. Pachomius relates that one day his sister came to see him and expressed a desire to embrace the perfect life. Pachomius said to her: "Examine yourself, and if God calls you, my brethren will build a cell and a little altar for you near the village." Soon a monastery was needed, for several pious women placed themselves under the direction of Pachomius' sister. Such was the origin of monasteries for women in the East.

The rule which the new founder gave his monks was naturally milder than that which most of the ascetics imposed upon themselves. Wishing to render it uniform and accessible to all, he was obliged to take account of a certain average of physical strength and fervor. The austerity of the rule was moderated. Besides, it was pliant. "Know you not," said the kind Patriarch, "that certain brethren, especially the younger ones, have need of some relaxation and rest?" He also said: "To the generosity of each one leave the initiative of a greater mortification. Serve the table abundantly, that each one may deny himself and advance in virtue according to his fervor."

Palladius has preserved for us a summary of the Pachomian rule. Every one was allowed to eat according to the needs of his health. The labors were proportioned to the strength of the brethren. The food was eaten in a single place. When every one was ready to eat, a psalm was sung. The monks ate their meals in silence, their head being covered with a hood. Each one had to learn the New Testament by heart and be able to recite the entire Psalter without a book. A three years' novitiate was of obligation for any candidate who presented himself. During that time he was engaged especially in corporal works. At the end of the three years of probation he was admitted to the choir. Every one wore a sleeveless linen tunic, gathered in at the waist by a cincture, and over this a cloak of goatskin and a hooded cowl. They slept in a partly reclining position, covered by a blanket.⁶⁸

Palladius says that soon several monasteries had thousands of monks.⁶⁹

"When Athanasius went up the Nile to visit, as far as the higher Thebaid, these numerous communities whose fidelity appeared to him the principal bulwark of orthodoxy, Pachomius led an immense army of monks to meet the stranger, all chanting hymns, and burning with the spirit which should vanquish and bury all the heresies. This was the first review of the new army of the Church."⁷⁰

This new army soon found its task for the defense of the faith and of discipline. The Constantinian peace did not remove every threat of storm. Constantine inaugurated the protection of the Church by the State. But this was neither gratuitous nor free from danger. The transfer of the imperial capital to the East might become an occasion of schism. The century that witnessed the birth of Antony and Pachomius,

⁶⁸ Palladius, *Lausiac History*, tr. by W. K. L. Clarke, chap. 32.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁷⁰ Montalembert, *Monks of the West*, I, 310.

likewise saw Arius appear. In the future, schisms and heresies would be the more formidable since they might hope to win to their side the imperial good will. But cenobitism was to increase. From the East it reached the West and spread over the Christian world. In its ranks the Church found her most devoted sons. From St. Athanasius to St. Augustine, from St. Augustine to St. Boniface, from St. Boniface to St. Gregory VII, monachism gave to the Church her most valiant apologists, her most profound scholars, her bravest missionaries, and her greatest popes.

APPENDIX I

The Primitive Canon of the Mass

WHAT was the early canon of the Mass? Was there a primitive and essential formula from which all the liturgies sprang? Until recent years this problem seemed insoluble. The discovery of documents of great worth and the patient labor undertaken in their study by Dom Paul Cagin, a Benedictine of Solesmes, seem to furnish a solution.

By comparing five of these documents, in particular the *Canonum Reliquiae*, Latin palimpsest fragments of Verona, and the *Testamentum Domini*, a Syriac manuscript first published in 1899 by Monsignor Rahmani, patriarch of the uniate Syrians, Dom Cagin concludes that the original document, of which these are successive translations of one another, is a Greek text, the Verona manuscript being a Latin translation of it. The following is the Verona formula:

Gratias tibi referimus, Deus per dilectum puerum tuum Jesum Christum, quem in ultimis temporibus misisti nobis Salvatorem et Redemptorem et angelum voluntatis tuae, qui est Verbum tuum inseparabilem, per quem omnia fecisti, et beneplacitum tibi fuit; misisti de caelo in matricem Virginis, quique in utero habitus incarnatus est, et Filius tibi ostensus est ex Spiritu Sancto et Virgine natus; qui voluntatem tuam complens, et populum sanctum tibi adquirens, extendit manus, cum pateretur, ut a passione liberaret eos qui in te crediderunt; qui, cumque traderetur voluntariae passioni, ut mortem solvat et vincula diaboli dirumpat, et infernum calcet, et justos illuminet, et terminum figat, et resurrectionem manifestet, accipiens panem, gratias tibi agens, dixit: accipite, manducate: hoc est corpus meum, quod pro vobis confringetur. Similiter et calicem, dicens: hic

est sanguis meus, qui pro vobis effunditur; quando hoc facitis, **meam** commemorationem facitis. Memores igitur mortis et resurrectionis ejus, offerimus tibi panem et calicem, gratias tibi agentes, quia nos dignos habuisti adstare coram te et tibi ministrare. Et petimus ut mittas Spiritum tuum Sanctum in oblationem sanctae Ecclesiae; in unum congregans, des omnibus, qui percipiunt sanctis, in repletionem Spiritus Sancti, ad confirmationem fidei in veritate, ut te laudemus et glorificemus per puerum tuum Jesum Christum, per quem tibi gloria et honor, Patri et Filio cum Sancto Spiritu, in sancta Ecclesia tua, et nunc et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

We give Thee thanks, O God, through Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, whom in the last times Thou hast sent us as Savior and Redeemer and messenger [angel] of Thy will; who is Thy Word inseparable, by whom Thou hast made all things and [in whom] Thou hast been well pleased; [whom] Thou didst send from Heaven into the womb of the Virgin, and who in her womb was incarnate and has been shown Thy Son, being born of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin; who, fulfilling Thy will and winning for Thee a holy people, extended His hands when He suffered, to deliver by His Passion those who have believed in Thee; whom, when He was delivered to His freely accepted Passion, that He might destroy death and break the bonds of the devil and trample under foot hell and illumine the just and put an end and manifest the resurrection, said, taking bread [and] giving thanks: Take, eat, this is My body which will be broken for you. In like manner [He took] the chalice, saying: This is My blood which is shed for you; when you do this, you make commemoration of Me. We, remembering therefore His death and resurrection, offer Thee the bread and the chalice, giving Thee thanks, because Thou hast made us worthy to stand before Thee and to minister to Thee. And we ask that Thou send Thy Holy Spirit upon the oblation of the holy Church, that gathering [them] into one, Thou give to all the saints who receive [it] the fulness of the Holy Ghost for the confirmation of the faith in the truth, that we may praise and glorify Thee through Thy Son Jesus Christ, through whom may be to Thee glory and honor, to the Father and to the Son with the Holy Ghost, in Thy holy Church, now and for all ages. Amen.

"This is evidently a preface; but it contains the principal elements of the Canon of the Mass in all the liturgies: the account of the Last Supper, the words of consecration, the *Anamnesis*, the oblation of the sacrifice, a rudimentary *Epiclesis* with a view to the people's communion, and the Trinitarian doxology. This prayer is, therefore, both a preface and a Mass; it is an embryonic Mass, in which the thanksgiving continues from beginning to end. This Mass is a Eucharist in the full sense of the term."¹

How ancient is this formulary? The learned Benedictine whom we have just quoted refers it to Apostolic times. He regards as a well established fact that the formulary inserted in the *Testament of Our Lord* depends upon the primitive Greek text with interpolations conceived in the sense of the Monarchian heresy. Hence this interpolated text, by its archaisms, bears traces of a very early origin. It alludes to "charisms" which took place only in the first century. We read, for example, "*Eos qui sunt in charismatibus . . . sustine, . . . qui habent virtutem linguarum robora,*" etc. "This allusion to the charisms is equivalent to a birth-certificate for a text that so abounds in reference to them."²

¹ Souben, "*Le Canon primitif de la messe,*" in the *Questions ecclésiastiques*, April, 1909.

² Consequently little importance attaches to the date of the compilation which has inserted this early text. It bears in itself the evidence of its antiquity. (See also Cagin, *L'Eucharistia, canon primitif de la messe*, and *L'Anaphore apostolique et ses témoins.*)

APPENDIX II

*Letter from the Churches of Lyons and Vienne to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia*¹

The servants sojourning in Vienne and Lyons in Gaul to the brethren in Asia and Phrygia, who have the same faith and hope of redemption as you. Peace, grace, and glory from God the Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The greatness of the persecution here, and the terrible rage of the heathen against the saints, and the suffering of the blessed martyrs, are more than we can narrate accurately, nor can they be put down in writing. For with all his might the adversary attacked us, foreshadowing his coming which is shortly to be, and tried everything, practising his adherents and training them against the servants of God, so that we were not merely excluded from houses and baths and markets, but we were even forbidden to be seen at all in any place whatever. But against them the grace of God did captain us; it rescued the weak, and marshalled against them steadfast pillars of men able by patience to draw to themselves all the attack of the enemy. They came together and endured every kind of abuse and punishment, they counted many things as few in their zeal for Christ, and did indeed prove that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us.

First they endured nobly all that was heaped upon them by the mob, howls and stripes and dragging about, and rapine and imprisonment and stoning, and all things which are wont to happen at the hands of an infuriated populace against its supposed enemies and foes. Then they were dragged into the market-place by the tribune and by the chief authorities of the city, were indicted and confessed, and at last

¹ This letter, written in 177, is one of the most perfect documents of Christian antiquity. Its authenticity is unquestioned. (Our English version is taken from Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, V, i, translated by Kirsopp Lake, in the Loeb Classical Library.—*Tr.*)

they were shut up until the coming of the governor. Then they were brought before the governor, and when he used all his cruelty against them, then intervened Vettius Epagathus, one of the brethren, filled with love towards God and towards his neighbor, the strictness of whose life had gone so far that in spite of his youth his reputation was equal to that of the elder Zacharias. He walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless and was unwearied in all ministrations to his neighbors, having much zeal toward God and being fervent in spirit. His character forbade him to endure the unreasonable judgment given against us and, overcome with indignation, he asked to be heard himself in defence of the brethren to the effect that there was nothing atheistic or impious among us. He was howled down by those around the judgment-seat, for he was a man of position, and the governor would not tolerate the just requests which he had put forward, but merely asked if he were a Christian himself. He then confessed in clear tones and was himself taken into the ranks of the martyrs. He was called the "Comforter of Christians," but had the Comforter in himself, the spirit of Zacharias which he had shown by the fulness of his love when he chose to lay down even his own life for the defence of the brethren, for he was and he is a true disciple of Christ, and he follows the Lamb wheresoever He goes.

The rest were then divided and the first martyrs were obviously ready, and they fulfilled the confession of martyrdom with all readiness, but some others appeared not to be ready, and failed in training and in strength, unable to endure the strain of a great conflict, and about ten in number failed, as those born out of due time. They caused us great grief and immeasurable mourning, and hindered the zeal of the others who had not been arrested. Yet they, although suffering all the terrors, nevertheless remained with the martyrs and did not desert them.

But at that point we were all greatly terrified by uncertainty as to their confession, not fearing the threatened punishment but looking towards the end and afraid lest some one should fall away. Yet day by day those who were worthy went on being arrested, completing their number, so as to collect from the two churches all the zealous and those through whom the life of the locality was kept together.

There were also arrested certain heathen slaves of our members, since the governor had publicly commanded that we should all be prosecuted, and these by the snare of Satan, fearing the tortures which they saw the saints suffering, when the soldiers urged them, falsely accused us of Thyestian feasts and Oedipodean intercourse, and things which it is not right for us either to speak of or to think of or even to believe that such things could ever happen among men. When this rumor spread all men turned like beasts against us, so that even if any had formerly been lenient for friendship's sake, they then became furious and raged against us, and there was fulfilled that which was spoken by our Lord, that "the time will come when whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." Then at last the holy martyrs endured sufferings beyond all description, for Satan was striving to wring some blasphemy even from them.

All the fury of the mob and of the governor and of the soldiers was raised beyond measure against Sanctus, the deacon from Vienne, and against Maturus, who was a novice, but a noble contender, and against Attalus, a Pergamene by race, who had always been a pillar and support of the Christians there, and against Blandina, through whom Christ showed that things which are mean and obscure and contemptible among men are vouchsafed great glory with God because of the love towards Him shown in power and not boasted of in appearance.

For while we were all afraid, and her human mistress, who was herself one of the contenders among the martyrs, was in distress lest she should not be able, through the weakness of her body, to be bold enough even to make confession, Blandina was filled with such power that she was released and rescued from those who took turns in torturing her in every way from morning until evening, and they themselves confessed that they were beaten, for they had nothing left to do to her, and they marvelled that she still remained alive, seeing that her whole body was broken and opened, and they testified that any one of these tortures was sufficient to destroy life, even when they had not been magnified and multiplied. But the blessed woman, like a noble athlete, kept gaining in vigor in her confession, and found comfort and rest and freedom from pain from

what was done to her by saying, "I am a Christian woman, and nothing wicked happens among us."

Sanctus also himself endured nobly, beyond measure or human power, all the ill-treatment of men, for though the wicked hoped through persistence and the rigor of his tortures to wring from him something wrong, he resisted them with such constancy that he did not even tell his own name, or the race or the city whence he was, nor whether he was slave or free, but to all questions answered in Latin, "I am a Christian." This he said for name and city and race and for everything else, and the heathen heard no other sound from him. For this reason the governor and the torturers were very ambitious to subdue him, so that when they had nothing left at all to do to him, at last they fastened plates of heated brass to the tenderest parts of his body. His limbs were burning, but he continued himself unbending and unyielding, firm in his confession, refreshed and strengthened by the heavenly spring of the water of life which proceeds forth from the body of Christ. His body was a witness to his treatment; it was all one wound and bruise, wrenched and torn out of human shape, but Christ suffering in him manifested great glory, overthrowing the adversary and showing for the example of the others how there is nothing fearful where there is the love of the Father, nor painful where there is the glory of Christ. For when the wicked after some days again tortured the martyr, they thought that they might overcome him now that his body was swollen and inflamed if they applied the same tortures, seeing that he could not even endure to be touched by the hand, or that by dying under torture he would put fear into the rest. Yet not only did nothing of this kind happen, but, beyond all human expectation, he raised himself up and his body was straightened in the subsequent tortures, and he regained his former appearance and the use of his limbs, so that through the grace of Christ the second torturing became not torment but cure.

Biblis, too, one of those who had denied, did the devil bring to torture (thinking that he had already swallowed her up and wishing to condemn her through blasphemy as well), to force her to say impious things about us, as though she were already broken and weak. But she recovered under torture and, as it were, woke

up out of deep sleep, being reminded through this transitory punishment of the eternal torments in hell, and contradicted the blasphemers, saying, "How would such men eat children, when they are not allowed to eat the blood even of irrational animals?" And after this she confessed herself a Christian and was added to the ranks of the martyrs.

But when the tyrant's torments had been brought to naught by Christ through the endurance of the blessed saints, the devil thought of other devices, imprisonment in the jail in darkness and in the most horrible place, and stretching their feet in the stocks, separated to the fifth hole, and the other outrages which angry warders filled with the devil are accustomed to inflict on the prisoners. Thus most of them were strangled in the prison, being all those whom the Lord had chosen thus to depart manifesting His glory. Some were tortured so cruelly that it seemed impossible for them to live even if they had had every care, yet survived in the prison, bereft of human attention, but strengthened by the Lord and given power in body and soul, and looking after and comforting the rest. But the younger ones, who had lately been arrested, whose bodies had not become accustomed to it, did not endure the burden of confinement, but died in prison.

The blessed Pothinus, who had been entrusted with the ministry of the bishopric at Lyons, was over ninety years old and very weak physically. He was scarcely breathing through the physical weakness which had already come upon him, but was strengthened by zeal of spirit through urgent desire of martyrdom. He was dragged before the judgment-seat, and although his body was weakened by old age and disease, his soul was kept in him in order that through it Christ might triumph. He was brought by soldiers to the judgment-seat; the local authorities accompanied him, and all the populace, uttering all kinds of howls at him as though he was Christ Himself, but he gave noble testimony. When asked by the governor, who was the God of the Christians, he said, "If you are worthy, you will know." And then he was dragged about without mercy, and suffered many blows; for those who were near ill-treated him with feet and hands and in every way, without respect even for his old age, and those who were at a distance each threw at him whatever he had at hand,

and all thought that it would be a great transgression and impiety to omit any abuse against him. For they thought that in this way they would vindicate their gods. And he was thrown into prison scarcely breathing and after two days yielded up the ghost.

Then a great dispensation of God was given, and the measureless mercy of Jesus was so manifested, as has rarely happened among the brethren, but is not beyond the skill of Christ. For those who at the first arrest had denied were imprisoned themselves and shared in the terrors, for this time not even their denial was any advantage to them; but those who confessed, were imprisoned as Christians, no other accusation being brought against them, the others however were held as murderers and foul persons and punished twice as much as the rest. For the burden of the former was lightened by the joy of martyrdom and the hope of the promises, and by love towards Christ and by the Spirit of the Father; but the latter were greatly punished by their conscience so that they were conspicuous among all the rest by their faces when they were taken out. For some went forth gladly; glory and great grace were mingled on their faces, so that they wore even their fetters as a becoming ornament, like a bride adorned with golden lace of many patterns, and they were perfumed with the sweet savor of Christ, so that some supposed that they had been anointed with worldly unguents; but the others were depressed and humble and wretched and filled with every kind of unseemliness, and in addition were insulted by the heathen as ignoble and cowardly; they had gained the accusation of murder, but had lost the name which is full of honor and glory and gives life. When the others saw this they were strengthened and those who were arrested confessed without hesitation and gave no thought to the arguments of the devil.

After this the testimony of their death fell into every kind of variety. For they wove various colors and all kinds of flowers into one wreath to offer to the Father, and so it was necessary for the noble athletes to undergo a varied contest, and after great victory to receive the great crown of immortality. Maturus and Sanctus and Blandina and Attalus were led forth to the wild beasts, to the public, and to a common exhibition of the inhumanity of the heathen, for the day of fighting with beasts was specially appointed for the

Christians. Maturus and Sanctus passed again through all torture in the amphitheater as though they had suffered nothing before, but rather as though, having conquered the opponent in many bouts, they were now striving for his crown, once more they ran the gauntlet in the accustomed manner, endured the worrying of the wild beasts, and everything which the maddened public, some in one way, some in another, were howling for and commanding, finally the iron chair on which the roasting of their own bodies clothed them with its reek. Their persecutors did not stop even here, but went on growing more furious, wishing to conquer their endurance, yet gained nothing from Sanctus beyond the sound of the confession which he had been accustomed to make from the beginning.

Thus after a long time, when their life still remained in them through the great contest, they were at last sacrificed, having been made a spectacle to the world throughout that day as a substitute for all the variations of gladiatorial contests. But Blandina was hung on a stake and offered as a prey to the wild beasts that were let in. She seemed to be hanging in the shape of a cross, and by her continuous prayer gave great zeal to the combatants, while they looked on during the contest, and with their outward eyes saw in the form of their sister Him who was crucified for them, to persuade those who believe in Him that all who suffer for the glory of Christ have forever fellowship with the living God. Then, when none of the beasts would touch her, she was taken down from the stake and brought back into the jail, and was thus preserved for another contest, in order that by winning through more trials she might make irrevocable the condemnation of the crooked serpent, and might encourage the brethren. For small and weak and despised as she was, she had put on the great and invincible athlete, Christ; she had overcome the adversary in many contests, and through the struggle had gained the crown of immortality.

But Attalus was himself loudly called for by the crowd, for he was well known. He went in, a ready combatant, for his conscience was clear, and he had been nobly trained in Christian discipline and had ever been a witness for truth among us. He was led round the amphitheater and a placard was carried before him, on which was written in Latin, "This is Attalus, the Christian." The people were

very bitter against him, but when the governor learnt that he was a Roman, he commanded him to be put back with the rest, who were in the jail, about whom he had written to the emperor and was waiting for a reply.

But the intervening time was not idle or fruitless for them, but through their endurance was manifested the immeasurable mercy of Christ, for through the living the dead were being quickened and martyrs gave grace to those who had denied. And there was great joy to the Virgin Mother who had miscarried with them as though dead, and was receiving them back alive. For through them the majority of those who had denied were again brought to birth and again conceived and quickened again, and learned to confess, and now alive and vigorous, made happy by God, who wills not the death of the sinner, but is kind towards repentance, went to the judgment-seat, in order that they might again be interrogated by the governor. For Caesar had written that they should be tortured to death, but that if any should recant they should be let go, and at the beginning of the local feast (and this is widely attended by the concourse of all the heathen to it) the governor led them to the judgment-seat, making a show and spectacle of the blessed men to the mob. He accordingly examined them again, beheaded all who appeared to possess Roman citizenship, and sent the rest to the beasts. And Christ was greatly glorified by those who had formerly denied but then confessed contrary to the expectation of the people. For they were examined by themselves with the intention of then letting them go, but confessed and were added to the ranks of the martyrs. Those indeed remained without who had never had any vestige of faith, nor perception of the bridal garment, nor idea of the fear of God, but even through their behavior blasphemed the Way—they are the sons of perdition—but all the rest were added to the Church. When they too were being examined a certain Alexander, a Phrygian by race and a physician by profession, who had lived in Gaul for many years and was known to almost every one for his love toward God and boldness of speech (for he was not without a share of the apostolic gift) stood by the judgment-seat and by signs encouraged them to confession and seemed to those who were standing by as though he were in travail. But the crowd, angry that those

who had formerly denied were confessing again, howled at Alexander as though he were responsible for this. The governor summoned him and asked him who he was, and when he said "a Christian," he flew into a rage and condemned him to the beasts. And the next day he went into the arena together with Attalus; for to please the mob the governor had given Attalus back to the beasts. They passed through all the instruments of torture which were prepared in the amphitheater, and endured a great contest. Finally they too were sacrificed. Alexander uttered neither groan nor moan at all, but conversed with God in his heart, and Attalus, when he was put on the iron chair and was being burned, and the reek arose from his body, said to the crowd in Latin, "Lo, this which you are doing is to eat men, but we neither eat men nor do anything else wicked." And when he was asked what name God has, he replied, "God has not a name as a man has."

In addition to all this, on the last day of the gladiatorial sports, Blandina was again brought in with Ponticus, a boy of about fifteen years old, and they had been brought in every day to see the torture of the others, and efforts were made to force them to swear by the idols, and the mob was furious against them because they had remained steadfast and disregarded them, so that there was neither pity for the youth of the boy nor respect for the sex of the woman. They exposed them to all the terrors and put them through every torture in turn, trying to make them swear, but not being able to do so. For Ponticus was encouraged by the Christian sister, so that even the heathen saw that she was exhorting and strengthening him, and after nobly enduring every torture he gave up his spirit.

But the blessed Blandina, last of all, like a noble mother who had encouraged her children and sent them forth triumphant to the king, having herself endured all the tortures of her children, hastened to them, rejoicing and glad at her departure as though invited to a marriage feast rather than cast to the beasts. And after scourging, after the beasts, after the grid-iron, she was at last put in a net and thrown to a bull. She was tossed about a long time by the beast, having no more feeling for what happened to her through her hope and hold on what had been entrusted to her and her converse with Christ. And so she too was sacrificed, and the heathen themselves

confessed that never before among them had a woman suffered so much and so long.

Not even thus was their madness and cruelty to the saints satisfied, for, incited by a wild beast, wild and barbarous tribes could scarcely stop, and their violence began again in a new way on the bodies. For that they had been conquered did not shame them, because they had no human reason, but it rather inflamed their wrath as of a wild beast, and the governor and the people showed the like unrighteous hatred against us, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "Let him that is unlawful be unlawful still, and he that is righteous be righteous still." For those who had been strangled in the jail they threw to the dogs, and watched carefully night and day that none should be cared for by us. Then they threw out the remains left by the beasts and by the fire, torn and charred, and for many days watched with a military guard the heads of the rest, together with their trunks, all unburied. And some raged and gnashed their teeth at the remains, seeking some further vengeance from them, others laughed and jeered, glorifying their idols and ascribing to them the punishment of the Christians, and the gentler, who seemed to have a little sympathy, mocked greatly, saying, "Where is their god and what good to them was their worship, which they preferred beyond their lives?" Their conduct thus varied, but in our circle great grief obtained, because we could not bury the bodies in the earth, for night did not avail us for this, nor did money persuade nor entreaty shame, but in every way they watched, as though they would make some great gain, that the bodies should not obtain burial.

Thus the bodies of the martyrs, after having been exposed and insulted in every way for six days, and afterwards burned and turned to ashes, were swept by the wicked into the river Rhone, which flows near by, that not even a relic of them might still appear upon the earth. And this they did as though they could conquer God and take away their rebirth in order, as they said, "that they might not even have any hope of resurrection, through trusting in which they have brought in strange and new worship and despised terrors, going readily and with joy to death; now let us see if they will rise again, and if their God be able to help them and to take them out of our hands."

And they carried so far their zeal and imitation of Christ, "who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God," that for all their glory, and though they had testified not once or twice, but many times, and had been taken back from the beasts and were covered with burns and scars and wounds, they neither proclaimed themselves martyrs, nor allowed us to address them by this title. But if ever any one of us called them martyrs either in a letter or in speech, they rebuked him sharply. For they gladly conceded the title of martyrdom to Christ, the faithful and true martyr and first-born from the dead and author of the life of God. And they reminded us of the martyrs who had already passed away, and said, "they are already martyrs whom Christ vouchsafed to be taken up at their confession, and sealed their witness by their departure, but we are lowly and humble confessors." And they besought the brethren with tears, begging that earnest prayers might be made for their consecration. The power of martyrdom they actually showed, having great boldness toward the heathen, and they made plain their nobleness by endurance and absence of fear or timidity; but the title of martyr they refused from the brethren, for they were filled with the fear of God.

They humbled themselves under the mighty hand and by it they have now been greatly exalted. At that time they made defence for all men, against none did they bring accusation. They released all and bound none. And they prayed for those who had inflicted torture, even as did Stephen, the perfect martyr, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And if he prayed for those who were stoning him, how much more for the brethren?

For their greatest contest, through the genuineness of their love, was this, that the beast should be choked into throwing up alive those whom he had at first thought to have swallowed down. For they did not boast over the fallen, but from their own abundance supplied with a mother's love those that needed, and shedding many tears for them to the Father, they prayed for life, and He gave it to them, and they divided it among their neighbors, and then departed to God, having in all things carried off the victory. They ever loved peace; peace they commended to us; and with peace they departed to God; for their mother they left behind no sorrow, and

for the brethren: no strife and war, but glory, peace, concord, and love.

There was among them a certain Alcibiades, who was living a very austere life, and at first was not partaking of anything at all, but used merely bread and water and was trying to live thus even in the jail. But it was revealed to Attalus after the first contest which he underwent in the amphitheater that Alcibiades was not doing well in not making use of the creations of God, and offering an example of offence to others. Alcibiades was persuaded and began to partake of everything without restraint and gave thanks to God. For they were not without help from the grace of God, but the Holy Spirit was their counsellor.

APPENDIX III

*List of the Martyrs of Lyons*¹

AT Lyons, in Gaul, these martyrs:

Pothinus, bishop; Zacharias, priest; Vittus, Macarius, Asclepiades, Silvius, Primus, Ulpus, Vitalis, Cominus, Octobres, Philemon, Geminus, Julius, Albinus, Grata, Potamia, Pampeia, Rodana, Biblis, Quartia, Materna, Elpis.

Those who were thrown to the beasts are: Sanctus, deacon; Martyrus, Attalus, Alexander, Ponticus, Blandina.

Those who died in prison are: Aristus, Cornelius, Zosimus, Titus, Julius, Zoticus, Apollo, Geminian, Julia, Ausonius, Emelia, Jamnica, Pompeia, Domna, Amelia, Justa, Trophima, Antonia.

All these servants of Christ were crowned in the reign of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.

And besides these: Vincent, Nina, Priscus, Sepaca, Hilary, Felix, Castula.

And also in the same city: Epagatus, Emelia, Donata.

¹ From the Hieronymian Martyrology (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 1894, p. 73).

APPENDIX IV

*The Didache, or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*¹

CHAPTER I

1. There are two ways, one of life and one of death: and there is a great difference between the two ways.

2. The way of life is this: First, thou shalt love God who made thee; second, thy neighbor as thyself. And all things whatsoever thou dost not wish to be done to thee, those do not thou to another.

3. Now the teaching of these words is as follows: Bless those that curse you and pray for your enemies, and fast for those that persecute you. For what thank is it, if ye love them that love you? Do not even the Gentiles the same? But do ye love those that hate you, and ye shall not have an enemy.

4. Abstain from fleshly and bodily desires. If any one give thee a blow on the right cheek, turn to him the other also, and thou shalt be perfect. If a man compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. If a man take thy cloak, give him thy coat also. If a man take from thee what is thine, ask it not back, for, indeed, thou canst not.

5. Give to every one that asketh thee, and ask it not again; for the Father wills to give to all of his own gracious gifts. Blessed is he that giveth according to the commandment, for he is without guilt. Woe to him that receiveth. For if a man receiveth that hath

¹ This precious document, discovered and published in 1883 by Philotheus Bryennius, then metropolitan of Nicomedia, according to a manuscript in the library of the Greek patriarch of Jerusalem, is a writing of the earliest antiquity. Funk, Zahn, and Schaff date its composition between 80 and 100 of our era, probably "nearer 80 than 100" (Hemmer, *Les Pères apostoliques*, I, xxxv), "and perhaps even earlier" (Batiffol, *Anciennes littératures chrétiennes*, p. 72). There is no document giving us more precise and reliable information about the life, customs, morals, and constitutions of Christianity at the period of its beginnings. (The English translation here given is taken from Cruttwell, *A Literary History of Early Christianity*, I, 63 ff.—Tr.)

need, he shall be guiltless. But he that hath no need shall be punished, because he received, and up to the amount; and being in durance, shall be examined as to his deeds, and shall not come out thence till he have paid the uttermost farthing.

6. Moreover it is laid down on his head. Let thine alms sweat within thine hands, until thou knowest to whom thou art giving it.

CHAPTER II

1. The second commandment of the teaching is:

2. Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not corrupt boys, thou shalt not commit fornication, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not deal in magic, thou shalt not make philtres, thou shalt not procure abortion, nor slay a child that is born. Thou shalt not covet that which is thy neighbor's.

3. Thou shalt not perjure thyself, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not speak ill of any one, thou shalt not bear a grudge.

4. Thou shalt not be double-minded or double-tongued. For a double tongue is a snare of death.

5. Thy word shall not be false or empty, but filled with accomplishment.

6. Thou shalt not be grasping nor greedy, nor a hypocrite, nor ill-natured, nor proud. Thou shalt not take evil counsel against thy neighbor.

7. Thou shalt not hate any one; but some thou shalt convince, and to some thou shalt give way, and others thou shalt love above thine own life.

CHAPTER III

1. My child, flee from evil, and from all that is like unto him.

2. Be not wrathful: for wrath leads to murder. Be not a zealot nor a wrangler nor passionate. For from all these things murders arise.

3. My child, be not lustful, for lust leadeth to fornication: nor of base converse, nor given to raising thy eyes, for from these things adulteries arise.

4. My child, be not a soothsayer: for this leadeth to idolatry;

nor given to charms, astrology, or lustrations, nor even be willing to look at them, for from all these things idolatry proceedeth.

5. My child, be not a liar: for a lie leadeth to theft; nor money-loving, nor vainglorious: for from all these things thefts arise.

6. My child, be not a murmurer, for it leadeth to blasphemy; nor conceited nor evil-thinking; for from all these things blasphemies arise.

7. But be meek, for the meek shall inherit the earth.

8. Be long-suffering and pitiful and guileless and quiet and good and reverencing continually the words which thou hast heard.

9. Thou shalt not exalt thyself, nor give rashness to thy soul. Thy soul shall not be joined with the lofty, but thou shalt hold converse with the just and the humble.

10. The troubles that befall thee receive as good things, knowing that nothing happeneth without God.

CHAPTER IV

1. My child, remember him that speaketh the Word of God to thee by day and by night. Thou shalt honor him as the Lord. For in whatsoever quarter the Lordship is spoken, there is the Lord.

2. Thou shalt seek out day by day the faces of the saints, that thou mayest rest in their words.

3. Thou shalt not make a division, but shalt set at one those that quarrel. Thou shalt judge justly, thou shalt not respect persons in convicting of transgressions.

4. Thou shalt not be of two minds whether a thing shall be or not.

5. Be not one to stretch out the hand for receiving and close it up for giving.

6. If thou hast money, thou shalt give it by thy hand as a ransom for thy sins.

7. Thou shalt not hesitate in giving nor murmur while thou givest: for thou shalt know who is the good recompenser of the reward.

8. Thou shalt not turn away from him that is in need, but shalt share all things with thy brother, and shalt not say that they are

thy own: for if we are sharers in the Immortal One, how much more in things mortal?

9. Thou shalt not remove thine hand from thy son or thy daughter, but shalt teach them from their youth up the fear of the Lord.

10. Thou shalt not command with bitterness thy slave or thy maiden, who hope in the same God, lest they fear not the God that is over you both. For He cometh not to call you by respect of persons, but those for whom He has made ready the Spirit.

11. And do ye, slaves, submit to your masters in reverence and fear as to a type of God.

12. Thou shalt hate all hypocrisy and all that is not pleasing to the Lord.

13. Thou shalt not forsake the commandments of the Lord, but shalt keep what thou hast received, neither adding thereto nor taking therefrom.

14. Thou shalt confess thy transgressions in the church, and shalt not come to thy prayer with an evil conscience.

CHAPTER V

1. And the way of death is this: First of all, it is evil and full of curse. Murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, magic, incantations, plunderings, false-witness, hypocrisies, double-heartedness, craftiness, pride, villainy, conceit, covetousness, base conversation, jealousy, rashness, loftiness, insolence.

2. Persecutors of good men, hating truth, loving a lie, not knowing the reward of righteousness, not joined to goodness nor to just judgment, asking not to do good but evil: far from whom is meekness and patience; loving vanity, pursuing compensation, not pitying the poor, not sorrowing over him that is in trouble, not knowing Him that made them, murderers of children, destroyers of the creation of God, turning away from him that is in need, grinding down the distressed, flatterers of the rich, unrighteous judges of the poor, full of all sin: may ye be delivered, my children, from all these.

CHAPTER VI

1. See that no one cause thee to wander from this way of doctrine, for such a one teaches thee apart from God.
2. For if thou canst bear the whole yoke of the Lord, thou shalt be perfect; but if not, do what thou canst.
3. In the matter of meat, bear what thou canst. But abstain strictly from meat offered to idols, for it is the service of dead gods.

CHAPTER VII

1. Concerning Baptism, baptize in this wise: Having said all these things beforehand, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost in living water.
2. But if thou hast no living water, baptize in other water: and if thou art not able to use cold, use warm.
3. But if thou hast neither, pour water three times upon the head in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
4. Before Baptism, let the baptizer and the baptized fast with such others as can; and thou shalt require the baptized to fast one or two days beforehand.

CHAPTER VIII

1. Let not your fastings be with the hypocrites; for they fast on the second and fifth days after the Sabbath: but do ye fast on the fourth and sixth days of the week.
2. Neither pray ye as the hypocrites, but as the Lord commanded in His Gospel, so pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our offenses, as we also forgive our offenders. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the power and the glory for ever.
3. Use this prayer three times a day.

CHAPTER IX

1. Concerning the Eucharist, thus give thanks (or "celebrate the Eucharist").

2. First, concerning the cup—"We give Thee thanks, O Our Father, for the holy vine of David Thy servant, which Thou hast made known to us by Jesus Thy Servant. Glory be to Thee for ever."

3. Concerning the broken bread—"We give Thee thanks, O Our Father, for the life and knowledge, which Thou hast made known to us by Jesus Thy Servant. Glory be to Thee for ever."

4. "As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, and being gathered together became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy Kingdom; for Thine is the glory and the power, through Jesus Christ, for ever."

5. Let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist, except those who have been baptized in the name of the Lord. For concerning this the Lord hath said, "Give not that which is holy unto dogs."

CHAPTER X

1. After ye are filled, thus give thanks:

2. "We give Thee thanks, Holy Father, for Thy holy Name, which Thou hast caused to dwell in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which Thou hast made known to us by Jesus Thy Servant. Glory be to Thee for ever."

3. "Almighty Lord, Thou hast created all things for the sake of Thy name. Thou hast given food and drink to men for enjoyment, that they may give Thee thanks, and Thou hast graciously given spiritual food and drink and eternal life through Thy Servant."

4. "Before all things, we give thanks to Thee, because Thou art mighty. Glory be to Thee for ever."

5. "Lord, remember Thy Church, to deliver it from all evil, and to perfect it in Thy love, and gather it together, the sanctified one, from the four winds into Thy kingdom, which Thou hast prepared for it. For Thine is the power and the glory for ever."

6. "Let grace come, and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David. If any is holy, let him come; if any is not so, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen."

7. Allow ye the prophets to give thanks as shall seem good to them.

CHAPTER XI

1. Whosoever shall come and teach you all these things aforesaid, receive him.

2. But if the teacher turn and teach another doctrine to destroy this, hear him not; but if he teach with a view to adding righteousness and knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord.

3. Concerning the Apostles and Prophets, according to the decree of the Gospel, thus do.

4. Let every Apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord.

5. He shall remain one day, and if there be need, another day also; but if he remain three days, he is a false prophet.

6. And when the Apostle cometh forth, let him not receive anything except bread until he go to rest; if he ask for money, he is a false prophet.

7. And every prophet that speaketh in the Spirit ye shall not try nor doubt: for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven.

8. Not every one that speaketh in the Spirit is a prophet, but only if he have the character of the Lord. By their characters a false prophet and a true prophet shall be known.

9. And every prophet that ordaineth a table in the Spirit shall not eat thereof: if otherwise, he is a false prophet.

10. And every prophet that teacheth the truth, if he do not what he teacheth, is a false prophet.

11. And every approved true prophet sacrificing at the earthly mystery of the Church, but not teaching to do what he himself doeth, shall not be judged of you: for he hath his judgment with God. For so also did the ancient prophets.

12. And whosoever shall say in the Spirit, Give me money or any other things, ye shall not hear him. But if he tell you to give in the matter of others that have need, let no one judge him.

CHAPTER XII

1. Let every one that cometh in the name of the Lord be received; and then, when ye have proved him, ye shall know him. For ye have the power of discernment on the right and on the left.

2. If he that cometh be a wayfarer, assist him so far as ye are able. But he shall not abide with you more than two days, or three, if there be a necessity.
3. But if he be willing to settle among you, being a craftman, let him work and eat.
4. But if he have no handicraft, consider in your wisdom how he may not live with you as a Christian in idleness.
5. But if he will not do this, he is a trafficker in Christ. Beware of such.

CHAPTER XIII

1. Every true prophet who is willing to settle among you is worthy of his maintenance.
2. So also a true teacher is worthy, even as the laborer, of his maintenance.
3. Therefore all the firstfruits of the produce of the wine-press and the threshing-floor, and of the oxen and of the sheep, thou shalt take and give to the prophets. For they are your high-priests.
4. But if ye have no prophet, give it to the poor.
5. If thou makest a feast, take the firstfruits and give it according to the commandment.
6. Likewise, when thou openest a cask of wine or oil, take the firstfruits and give it to the prophets.
7. Of money also and of raiment, and of every possession take the firstfruits, and as it shall seem good to thee, give it according to the commandment.

CHAPTER XIV

1. On the Lord's day of the Lord gather together and break bread and offer the Eucharist, having first confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure.
2. Let every one that hath a dispute with his friend not come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice be not profaned.
3. For this is the word spoken by the Lord: "In every place and

time to bring to Me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great King, saith the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the Gentiles.”

CHAPTER XV

1. Appoint to yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, meek men and without covetousness, true and approved. For they also minister to you the ministry of the prophets and teachers.

2. Do not therefore despise them; for they are those who are honored among you with the prophets and teachers.

3. Reprove one another not in wrath, but in peace, as ye have it in the Gospel: and to every one that misbehaveth against another let no one speak, nor let him be heard by you, until he repent.

4. Your prayers and your alms and all your actions so perform ye as ye have it commanded in the Gospel of the Lord.

CHAPTER XVI

1. Watch for your life. Let not your lamps be quenched, nor your loins be loosed, but be ye ready: for we know not the hour in which our Lord cometh.

2. Gather yourselves together frequently, seeking the things that are fitting for your souls; for the whole time of your faith shall not profit you unless ye be made perfect in the last time.

3. For in the last days shall the false prophets and corrupters be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate.

4. For by the increase of iniquity men shall hate and persecute and betray each other; and then shall the deceiver of the world appear as the Son of God, and shall do signs and wonders, and the earth shall be given over into his hands, and he shall do unlawful things which have never happened since the world began.

5. Then shall come the judgment of men into the fiery trial, and many shall be offended and perish. But those who remain in their faith shall be saved from the power of the curse.

6. And then shall the signs of the truth appear: first, the sign of the unrolling of heaven, then the sign of the voice of the trumpet, and the third shall be the resurrection of the dead.

7. Yet not of all the dead; but as it was said, "The Lord shall come, and all His saints with Him."

8. Then shall the world see the Lord coming above the clouds of heaven.

APPENDIX V

*The Edict of Milan*¹

WHEN we, Constantine and Licinius, emperors, had an interview at Milan, and conferred together with respect to the good and security of the commonweal, it seemed to us that, amongst those things that are profitable to mankind in general, the reverence paid to the Divinity merited our first and chief attention, and that it was proper that the Christians and all others should have liberty to follow that mode of religion which to each of them appeared best; so that that God, who is seated in Heaven, might be benign and propitious to us, and to every one under our government: and therefore we judged it a salutary measure, and one highly consonant to right reason, that no man should be denied leave of attaching himself to the rites of the Christians or to whatever other religion his mind directed him, that thus the supreme Divinity to whose worship we freely devote ourselves might continue to vouchsafe His favor and beneficence to us. And accordingly we give you to know that, without regard to any provisos in our former orders to you concerning the Christians, all who choose that religion are to be permitted, freely and absolutely, to remain in it, and not to be disturbed any ways or molested. And we thought fit to be thus special in the things committed to your charge, that you might understand that the indulgence which we have granted in matters of religion to the Christians is ample and unconditional; and perceive at the same time that the open and free exercise of their respective religions is granted to all others, as well as to the Christians: for it befits the well-ordered State and the tranquillity of our times that each individual be allowed, according to his own

¹ The official text of this edict is recorded by Lactantius (*Death of the Persecutors*, 48), except the preamble, which we have only in Eusebius' Greek translation (*Ecclesiastical History*, X, 15). (The English translation here given is from volume XXII of the Ante-Nicene Library: *The Works of Lactantius*, tr. by William Fletcher, pp. 207 f.—*Tr.*)

choice, to worship the Divinity; and we mean not to derogate aught from the honor due to any religion or its votaries.

Moreover, with respect to the Christians, we formerly gave certain orders concerning the places appropriated for their religious assemblies; but now we will that all persons who have purchased such places, either from our exchequer or from any one else, do restore them to the Christians, without money demanded or price claimed, and that this be performed peremptorily and unambiguously; and we will also, that they who have obtained any right to such places by form of gift do forthwith restore them to the Christians: reserving always to such persons who have either purchased for a price, or gratuitously acquired them, to make application to the judge of the district, if they look on themselves as entitled to any equivalent from our beneficence.

All those places are, by your intervention, to be immediately restored to the Christians. And because it appears that, besides the places appropriated to religious worship, the Christians did possess other places, which belonged not to individuals, but to their society in general, that is, to their churches, we comprehend all such within the regulation aforesaid, and we will that you cause them all to be restored to the society or churches, and that without hesitation or controversy: provided always, that the persons making restitution without a price paid shall be at liberty to seek indemnification from our bounty.

In furthering all which things for the behoof of the Christians, you are to use your utmost diligence, to the end that our orders be speedily obeyed, and our gracious purpose in securing the public tranquillity promoted. So shall that divine favor which, in affairs of the mightiest importance, we have already experienced, continue to give success to us, and in our successes make the commonweal happy. And that the tenor of this our gracious ordinance may be made known unto all, we will that you cause it by your authority to be published everywhere.

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